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IN THE WAKE OF WAR

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19

A Tale of the South
under Carpet-Bagger Administration

By

Verne S. Pease

CHICAGO NEW YORK

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MDCCCC

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by
VERNE S. PEASE

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P362
in

TO

GEORGE HENRY PEASE

AND

ESTHER WOOD PEASE

MY FATHER AND MOTHER



CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
PROLOGUE	11
I AN ARMY OF PEACE	35
II HOME AGAIN.	43
III THE ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION	51
IV REBUILDING BEGINS	58
V THE NEW MAN	67
VI THE NEW MAN IN ACTION	72
VII THE OLD, OLD STORY	82
VIII ORDERS IS ORDERS	90
IX INGRATITUDE, BLACK INGRATITUDE	97
X WHEREIN INSTRUCTIONS SEASON JUSTICE	101
XI ONE OF A TYPE ALMOST EXTINCT	117
XII CORN BREAD AND SWEAT OF THE BROW	125
XIII THE GLORIOUS CLIMATE OF CANADA	139
XIV THE SIGHT OF A BOOM TOWN	154
XV "FORTY ACRES AND A MULE"	173
XVI A MAN WITHOUT A COUNTRY	182
XVII SHOWS AGAIN THAT PEACE HATH HER VICTORIES	196
XVIII IN WHICH TROUBLE THREATENS	209
XIX SUNRISE AND PISTOLS	224
XX GENIUS IS RECOGNIZED	242
XXI WHICH TREATS OF MEETING AND PARTING	249
XXII IN WHICH HISTORY IS MADE	258
XXIII SOME REASONABLE CONCLUSIONS	267
XXIV THE MEN WITH CARPET-BAGS	273
XXV A BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION	278
XXVI WHEN ROGUES FALL OUT.	290
XXVII THE FREEDMAN BECOMES A STRIKER	310

XXVIII AN EXPLANATION	163
XXIX WHICH SHOWS THAT ALTHOUGH THE ETHIOPIAN CAN NOT CHANGE HIS SKIN, THE CAUCASIAN MAY CHANGE HIS COLOR	320
XXX WHAT ELI SAW AND HEARD	325
XXXI THE SECRET CONCLAVE	334
XXXII A MIGHTY POWER COMES, BUT DOES NOT APPEAR	342
XXXIII IN WHICH ELI MYSTERIOUSLY DISAP- PEARS	352
XXXIV IN WHICH THE PURSUITS OF PEACE ARE EXEMPLIFIED	357
XXXV THE SECRET ORDER TAKES FORM, BUT NOT A NAME	362
XXXVI IN WHICH THE DOCTRINE OF THE SAD- DUCEES IS UTTERLY CONFOUNDED	366
XXXVII VANITY FAIR, DONE IN COLORS .	376
XXXVIII IN WHICH THE * * EXTENDS ITS BENEFICENT OPERATIONS	386
XXXIX ANOTHER GLIMPSE AT HOME LIFE	391
XL ANOTHER ABUSE IS CORRECTED	398
XLI IN WHICH KOSCIUSKO IS THREATENED WITH GREAT PROSPERITY	403
XLII WHICH TREATS OF BUSINESS METHODS UNDER ADVANCED CIVILIZATION .	410
XLIII IN WHICH TWO CONSERVATIVE GENTLE- MEN ARE INSTRUCTED IN BUSINESS METHODS	416
XLIV THE NEW CITIZEN DEMONSTRATES HIS PREROGATIVE	422
XLV IN WHICH MYSTIC DEN MEETS A FOE	426
XLVI UNCLE PHIL'S LAST BAPTIZING	432
XLVII A WAR-WIDOW	437

IN THE WAKE OF WAR

PROLOGUE

THE PLAIN OF TEMPE

A BIT OF LOCAL HISTORY WITH A TOUCH OF CLASSIC LORE

THE Plain of Tempe has been a summering place for a dozen families from the Great Central Basin of Tennessee, since a time in the history of the State when the red man vacated its forests on his westward drift to extinction.

In the first years of the present century it was the location of an Indian agency in charge of that incomparable patriot and scholar, Colonel Return J. Meigs. Here he built his rude log cabin, and divided his time between the management of the Cherokees and the study of Greek Classics.

Upon the rough shelf above his desk stood a row of books containing Herodotus, Homer, Thucydides and other classics, in the original. An adventurer from the distant settlements noticed these books, and turning to Colonel Meigs, asked: "Do you speak Greek, Colonel?"

"Yes, sir," answered the Colonel. "I speak Greek and also Cherokee. I dwell among the living and the dead, but I prefer the dead."

The great scraggy hill to the north he called Mount Olympus; to the south arose the rude form of an ancient mountain, which he named Mount Ossa. Stretching between these was the beauti-

fully wooded Plain of Tempe; and, through it flowed an opal stream of freestone water, over which one could easily leap, and this, to complete the metaphor, he called the river Peneus.

By a call upon his fancy, he named the gushing chalybeate spring that burst forth from a precipitous bluff at the base of Ossa, Aganippe; although it is recorded that he never spoke of it without easing his conscience with an apology for the violence that tore its healing flood from Mount Helicon, and transferred it to Mount Ossa. It is, indeed, a miniature reproduction of historic ground, the semblance to this point existing in quite reasonable fact; and, while other like places have been made to serve barbarous personal vanity or business advantage by bearing up the name of some short-pedigreed aristocracy, or of a brand of hams or make of liquor, this has survived the commercial march of modern civilization, and to this day stands for all the beauty of song and story that first suggested it.

Here the redoubtable Colonel sang with Homer; declaimed with Demosthenes; speculated with Socrates and Plato; studied with Herodotus and Xenophon, and treated with, and finally vanquished, the barbarians,—an ideal life for one like Colonel Meigs, who adored giants dead, and abhorred pygmies living.

After the Indians had followed the receding west into the vast, unexplored region beyond the Mississippi River, and Colonel Meigs had abandoned his squatterarchy, Howard Grayson and Mortimer Lewis, two prosperous planters, had a survey made of five thousand acres of land, em-

bracing Mounts Olympus and Ossa and the Plain of Tempe, which they entered in the Public Lands Office, and for which, in due time, a grant was issued to them, bearing the great seal of the State of Tennessee and the unique signature of John Sevier, Governor. These gentlemen, who were owners of large plantations in the Great Central Basin, set about building cabins in the Plain, where, with their families and friends, they might pass the heated term in the cool, fresh air that came down from the verdure-clad hills surrounding. To this spot every summer since, save the four years of civil war, this genial company or their descendants have gone for comfort and recreation.

The Plain has been, through the several generations of occupants, a resort after the simple and happy fashion of that most unique and ideal civilization, the Ante-Bellum South.

A row of modest log houses facing on either side of the Peneus served for the owners and their guests, while back near the mountains, ranged in irregular lines, were the quarters of the negroes. On a hillock near by the houses was the Assembly, a large shed-roofed affair with open sides, a floor for dancing or other social entertainment through the week, in which were arranged rude benches of a Sunday for worship.

Each summer, in the good old time, after the wheat and oats were harvested and corn laid by, the Graysons and Lewises and their invited guests set forth for the Plain. The families headed the procession in carriages, followed by wagons bearing servants and provisions. They formed a

veritable caravan as they moved up the turnpike to the winding roads of the hill country. At night when the hills were reached, where hostleries were not maintained, they camped out in true cavalcade style.

The names of the persons composing these parties were not so unknown as to require emblazonment on carriage doors or horse trappings. All were possessed of sufficient wealth, yet there was no guise that could be construed into a display of ready money; nor was there any provision, as at too many modern summer resorts, for the exhibition of fine millinery or the physical charms of the young ladies. These companies were made up of happy, congenial folk on pleasure bent, supplied with plain comforts and possessed of boundless hospitality.

The camp for the summer of 1860 was set, and a large and happy company had been gathered. The usual round of dancing, rambles, excursions, and picnics was on. All worries and apprehensions apparently had been left behind on entering the Plain. But Colonel Rodeny Grayson and Major Walker Lewis, grandsons and representatives of the original founders of the resort, were frequently in private and serious conversation. The light and easy talk of insurrection by politicians and warm-blooded young men, contrary to their hope and expectation, had changed to sullen mutterings that threatened any day to fulminate and plunge the South, not into passive secession, but into aggressive civil war.

Each had won his rank and title in the Mexican war, and foresaw with the divination of experi-

ence the horrible consequences of rebellion. To them war meant more and other things than the glories sung by hireling poets. It meant the "science of destruction"—the first and most complete human science, because it has always lain nearest the human heart.

Contrary to custom, a trusty negro was sent each day to the nearest post office for letters and newspapers. One day early in July the batch of letters for Colonel Grayson contained one with the postmark of Claytown, Ohio. After glancing over the other letters, that his movements might not seem precipitate, he excused himself from the company and asked Major Lewis to join him for a walk. When they were beyond the hearing of the group he said: "I see, Walker, in looking over my mail that it contains a letter from my brother, or as you know, my half-brother, Felix Grayson. It must be important, at least he must think it important, or he would not address me; for, as you remember, he went back North somewhat vexed at me because I would not consent to his selling the mulatto girl, Rene, whom he claimed, and somewhat fairly so, over and above his interest in the estate of our father."

"What's the matter with Felix, now? Do you think he wants the nigger girl?" asked Major Lewis.

"No, I reckon not; I paid him for her at the time the estate was settled. The only negro I ever bought, and I bought her to keep Felix from hawking her about the slave market."

"Well, Rodeny, you're becoming confidential as you approach maturity. I never heard before

that you bought the girl. What claim had Felix on her, anyway?"

"Consanguinity, Major, I blush to say. You certainly have remarked the semblance of features. He wanted to get her out of the country, urged the claim of nature, and then made secret arrangements to send her to the block in Memphis. By accident I heard of his plans and then I paid him off. He took the money readily enough, but went away somewhat disgusted with my puritanical ideas."

"And all this time he was threatened with clerics, which afterward developed. Ah, Rodeny, you know what I have always said of preachers. They conjure theoretical morals until they lose all sight of vulgar, practical decencies. But where is your letter? What is he preaching about now?"

"About the same old subject, abolition. When he would visit us, after he had gone North with his mother, I could notice a change of sentiment during his stay. He would come down a rampant abolitionist; in a few days he would think we ought to be paid for our slaves by the Government, and before he left he would be stronger in the belief that slavery was morally right than ever I was. His mother never ceased to be an abolitionist, but she used to insist that father sell his slaves and invest the proceeds elsewhere before emancipation should rob him of the greater part of his wealth. She wanted somebody else to lose the chattels."

"A trifle inconsistent, I should say," observed the Major. "But your letter. We are growing

cynical over family affairs in the face of startling national issues."

Colonel Grayson drew out the letter, and read as follows:—

"Parsonage of First M. E. Church.

Claytown, Ohio, July 1, 1860.

Dear Brother:—

My flock has given me leave of absence over next Sabbath and I start for Tennessee Friday morning. I come to prove to you that my mother and I were right on the old subject of controversy between us. I can not write more, as letters directed to any part of the South miscarry sometimes if they are suspiciously large. Please send carriage for me at the railway station, Manlius.

Your affectionate brother,
Felix."

"Flock! I don't see the necessity for having printed letterheads for Felix. Any one would know he is a preacher," said the Major, when the letter was read.

"But do you see the drift of the letter? He is taking the trouble to come down here and again ply the same old argument, hoping to induce me to sell my slaves before emancipation shall be accomplished. He surely must think heroic action is impending. I believe, Walker, the crisis is nearer than we have feared."

"Possibly so. I do not think the culmination or fulmination will be hindered by men of Felix's profession. Preachers, like death, love a shining mark. One mighty sinner within sight of a church-house is worth more to them than a hundred tolerably decent ones too remote to serve as a horrible example. Well, Saturday will soon be here and we shall have to wait for Felix to tell us

what to do. Seriously, Rodeny, I am as anxious as you to know the real sentiment of the North."

"But if we learn that war threatens, what can we do to avert it?" asked the Colonel.

"I can't think, unless we turn preachers and preach the gospel of peace. But that would do no good. No one would listen to us, not even our own sons. The young men of the South have got to fight. We all have made a great mistake in bringing up our sons to idleness. If they were busy now, they would not have time to meditate on the glories of war. But I hope for some turn in affairs that will avert it. We can not have war, civil war. I love my rights, but I hate war and abhor its results, especially right here at home. Think of the misery! No, it can not be. Well, this is Thursday. We surely can wait two more days."

Captain Howard Grayson, the father of Colonel Rodeny Grayson, was, in his day, a man of capricious matrimonial ventures. In all else he was regarded as a man of superior ability. In the course of his three score years he had three legitimate opportunities to fall in love, and accepted all with the ardor of a boundless heart that execrates the interposition of cool judgment. It was the Captain's weakness, or perhaps strength, and at times he found himself somewhat at variance with the polite society in which he moved.

His first affair was while little more than a lad with Jackson's army at New Orleans, 1816. The woman, a beautiful French Creole, was no better than an adventuress. She possessed, however, the

virtue of shame, often lacking in otherwise better persons, and refused to disgrace her duped husband by going with him to his father's home; preferring to heal the wound in her remittent affections with a reasonable money allowance, which was her real purpose in ensnaring the green and impetuous young soldier.

The Captain mourned sincerely for a respectable time over his blighted hopes, but finally, on the importunity of his father, claimed residence at the Plain of Tempe and secured a divorce through the courts of the backwoods county, on the statutory ground of failure to remove to the State with him.

He remained a recluse two years after this experience, for the heart mends more slowly from disappointment than from bereavement; and when his friends were all predicting that he would become a hermit, he fell in love impetuously and hopelessly with Marcella Rodeny, the plain and rather unattractive daughter of one of the best families in his neighborhood. But unattractive daughters make the best wives, and this proved a happy marriage, to which was born Rodeny Grayson, the present master of Elmington. Soon after the birth of Rodeny, Howard Grayson, the Captain's father and the pioneer of the family in Tennessee, became possessed of the idea that the honorable succession of the name was assured and that nothing remained for him to do but to grow old and die; which he did in the course of a few years, but happily, not before he had left the mark of his probity and virtue on the character of the fledgling. It was well for young Rodeny

that he got his early impressions from so strong a moral current, for his mother died when he was scarce sixteen years of age, and he was left to the rather uncertain influence of the Captain's third infatuation.

This last effort, which developed the widest play of romantic stratagem in his romantic career, sprouted, grew, and went to harvest at a church convention, called to prevent a threatened schism over the slavery question. The woman, good enough of her kind, belonged to the class, scanty in those old-fashioned times, now called "strong-minded." Miss Felicia Croker, of Ohio, for such was her name in the list of delegates, was a very attractive person to a man of the Captain's constitutional susceptibility. Her vigorous, combative nature and her buxom form had carried the flower of youth into cheeks of uncertain but not doubtful age. To one who gave his judgment no voice in affairs of the heart she was irresistible, especially on first sight, which was always enough for the Captain. All else was intolerable detail to fill in time until the affair could be respectably celebrated. This time the detail was crowded into a very few days, to the delight of the rampant lover, and the evident satisfaction of Miss Croker.

The convention adjourned without results in the direction sought, but not wholly without fruit; for Captain Howard Grayson and Miss Felicia Croker, still irreconcilably at war on the subject of slavery as a national issue, came to terms on slavery as a domestic question, and went to the home of the again happy bridegroom as man and wife. This marriage, arranged in the very heat of fiery

debate, never rose above the plane of argument. The national issue would not remain settled above twenty-four hours at one time. Each day Mrs. Grayson felt the inward call to speak, and, as she mightily feared her conscience, she spake. When the discussion became too vehement for the Captain, he would resolve the question into its domestic and personal elements by asking: "What would you have me do, my dear? Emancipate all my slaves?" And suddenly there was a calm.

Nor was the argument confined to the home circle. Mrs. Grayson assailed the "twin relic" at the sewing circle and other social gatherings with the vigor and flow of color that had made her so attractive in the convention. Many of the ladies in the neighborhood thought she pressed her convictions with more zeal than was consistent with good breeding, and extended to her only such hospitality as was due the wife of the representative of the Grayson family. Altogether, she was not a success, and made the Captain as miserable as the constantly rekindling fires of his affection would permit him to be.

Mrs. Grayson made frequent visits to her friends in the North, and on one of these occasions gave birth to a son, who was christened before she returned to the South, Felix Croker Grayson. Ten years later the Captain died, leaving his large estate to the widow, her son, and Rodeny Grayson who was then an officer of volunteers in the Mexican war.

Such, in the rough, were the marital hazards of Captain Howard Grayson, and for the purposes of this history the details are sufficiently prolix. The

compiler leans to a more charitable opinion of his misfortunes or indiscretions than the world took of them half a century ago. For, whatever his luck or precipitancy in this regard, a more devoted and watchful father, a more just and considerate neighbor and a more shrewd and far-seeing man of affairs would not be met in a day's journey. Twice he represented his district in Congress, and declined offers of higher positions of trust and honor ; while the ninety-and-nine who went not astray, but browsed modestly about on the weeds and thistles of the worn-out sheep-fold, slipped quietly off to Abraham's bosom and dropped their names, white and clean as flakes of virgin snow, into the murky waters of oblivion. Happily, the son Rodeny inherited all his father's good traits of character, which were reinforced with the constancy and single-heartedness of his mother. Of the boy Felix, it can be said that, up to the time of the Captain's death, he displayed no single characteristic, good or bad, that could be labelled Grayson ; his early predilections were a source of great concern and heaviness to the declining years of his father.

Saturday came at last, and Uncle Phil, a trusty negro, was sent with team and carriage to bring the expected visitor from the railway station. About three o'clock in the afternoon he drove up before his master's cabin and the Rev. Felix Grayson alighted. The Colonel sat on the rude veranda awaiting the arrival, and when he saw his brother, walked slowly down the path to meet him and extended a cordial hand as he said: "I

am mighty glad to see you, Brother Felix, mighty glad. You are welcome to the simple hospitality of the Plain."

Before taking the Colonel's proffered hand, Felix raised both of his own hands in attitude of benediction, and said: "May the peace of God be upon this place and upon this house." Then taking his brother's hand he shook it heartily, and said, with studied deliberation: "I thank you, Rodeny, for this hearty welcome. I knew it awaited me and that you were still the same generous brother of the old times. How natural it all looks here, yet how quiet in comparison to our Northern resorts. Your family is all well, I hope?"

"Yes, thank you, Felix, we are in tolerable health. And your mother, is she well?"

"Very well, and sends her regards to you and all her friends. But since I left you, five years ago, there is one less to enquire after. I was sorely grieved over the death of your wife (he stopped suddenly at the sound of his cold, unfeeling words, but only shifted his eyes and corrected himself), Sister Mary, and I would have come down to offer my consolation, only at the time I was engaged in a blessed revival. We were fairly overwhelmed in a spiritual outpouring, such as one seldom sees. I had scarcely time to write you the letter, which I suppose you received."

"I do not recall the letter, Felix, but that was a troubled time and I can not well remember all that happened."

"You must have gotten it," continued Felix. "I remember so well of posting it. I suppose

Howard and your adopted daughter, Mary Lou, are here. They must be nearly grown by this."

"Yes, they are in the Plain, but did not expect you so soon or they would be here to join my welcome. They are back near the spring with the company. Howard is a man grown and gives every promise of being a comfort to my old age."

"Steady, I hope?" enquired Felix, with functional interest.

"Of correct morals, I believe. Somewhat impetuous and hasty, but no more than can be expected from a young Grayson. There comes Major Lewis. He is the same warm-hearted, peculiar gentleman as when you last saw him. You surely remember him?"

"Very well, and I can not see that he has become shorter, or stouter or less erect." Then he called to the Major, who was deliberately approaching from another part of the grounds: "How-do, Major Lewis. 'A thousand years are as one day' to you, so to speak. I can not see that you have changed a particle since I left Tennessee."

"Thank you, sir; I don't feel that I am yet an old man. Nothing like a clear conscience, Parson Felix, and no sins but my own to answer for — which you will remember were few." Then taking Felix by the hand he shook it cordially, while he surveyed him from head to foot. "Always like his mother, but now her mature image," he said. "But I'll wager my roan filly by Copperbottom, that you can not talk with her. She can right now argue you to a stand-still. I hope she is in good health."

"Very good, thank God." Answered the young minister, with an apparent tug at his feelings, which were not always at ready command. "I think you know she has married again. She is now the wife of the Rev. Dr. Simpson, one of the foremost divines of our church in the North, and often mentioned as the next bishop for our part of Ohio."

"If he will put himself in the hands of his wife, he will be nominated at the first caucus and elected on the first ballot," said the Major, bluntly.

"Only in the work of the Church, Major, we have no caucuses, and advancement comes with Divine guidance," answered the minister, with some warmth.

"You must pardon me, Felix, for not using the right word. You know I always was a blunderer with words. I simply was trying to express, in a clumsy manner, my admiration for your mother's superior ability. Caucus or no caucus, your step-father is as good as elected bishop. I will stake my roan filly on that, if it is proper to do so."

"Do you choose to refresh yourself before joining the company, Felix? No? We will walk over to the spring, then," said the Colonel, believing it time to cut off the Major, who was in one of his teasing moods.

Felix Grayson, at the mature age of twenty-four, was a man to command notice. He was tall, straight, muscular — of almost athletic build — and carried himself with a self-possession that is generally mistaken for dignity. He had his mother's round cheeks, rosy complexion, and

strong features. The casual observer would have put him down for a superior man in abilities and character; but the student of physiognomy would have halted his judgment before the restless gray eye, that seemed to be on the lookout for surprises. It had a venturesome snap, but seemed to turn on himself as if watching an ever-impending blunder or over-play.

During the conversation in the afternoon it was disclosed that Felix could remain at the Plain only until Monday morning. The Colonel pleaded, and Major Lewis pressed the point of hospitality that allowed no guest to depart under a full week, but to no result. The minister protested that he could not remain longer from his field of work, as continued absence might require explanations to his "flock."

"And, Rodeny," said he, "I want a little private conversation with you to-night, because that which I have to say is purely secular and hardly a fit subject for the Sabbath-day."

"After supper, Felix," replied the Colonel, "our friends will excuse us for a bit."

At supper that evening, the Major, Mrs. Lewis, and their son, Manning, were guests. It seemed almost a family reunion. Howard Grayson and Manning Lewis were young men of twenty and inseparable friends, as their fathers had been for forty years. They were about the average young gentlemen of the Ante-Bellum South: genteel, well-educated, lovers of field sports and attached to their section and its traditions. They had not reached the age of reflection and inquiry; they took things as they found them, because these

things had continued through a respectable space of time and must be right.

Both young men were filled with martial spirit and hoped eagerly for war. They had acquired, partly through their own zealous imaginings, exaggerated ideas of the dangers that threatened Southern traditions and civilization. What actually did happen they never once foresaw. When the conversation took a favorable turn, Howard asked : "Are the Yankees talking of war, Uncle Felix ? "

"Not so much as they are talking of the Constitution and the Union," answered the parson. "The abolition sentiment is gaining every day—not gaining in numbers, for as far as I can see there has been only one feeling since I have lived in the North, but the different factions are becoming united. The people there don't talk much about war, but I believe they would go to war to enforce their principles."

"Enforce their principles on others. I reckon," said Major Lewis.

"But they are not much fighters, are they ?" asked Howard, and not waiting for an answer, for the question was well settled in his own mind, he continued: "They are better traders than fighters. I was reading only a few days back, in a history of the Revolutionary War, that the strongest Tories in the country were the merchants of New England. The author said they opposed war from fear that it would injure trade; but all that changed when England taxed their goods. Then they got crazy and tried to make tea of the Atlantic Ocean. Perhaps they have as good principles now as they had then."

"Yes, that was the unholy influence of commerce," said Felix. "And I am told that the traders and financiers of Boston and New York would be strongly opposed to war now on the same ground."

"Trade is necessary with our busy, complicated civilization, and I have often regretted that the South has given so little attention to it; but at the same time it is utterly destructive of principles and patriotism," said Major Lewis.

"Well, then, I reckon they will fight to defend their money," persisted Howard.

"I hope and pray that they will not be called upon to fight at all," said the Colonel.

"Amen!" responded the Reverend Felix, in good Methodist time.

"And I hope not, and Mrs. Lewis prays the same way, don't you, my dear?" said the Major, who had fully recovered from the abnormally serious strain under the influence of which he had spoken of trade without jesting.

As they parted after supper Mrs. Lewis asked: "Shall we have preaching in the Assembly to-morrow, Colonel Grayson?"

"Yes, Madam. Mr. Sexton can not come, but I spoke to Uncle Phil early in the week, and he has promised to give us another of his sermons, one of his best."

"I overheard him practicing on it out back of the barns this morning right early," said the Major. "He said he was 'projekin' roun' in hisself to see if the sperit war thar', and I think he found it all right. Felix, I am charged, unjustly I protest, with bearing malice to the cloth,

but there is one preacher I love and like to listen to. He is a slave and a nigger, but a good man."

"What, Rodeny, do you have a negro slave to preach the gospel to you?" asked Felix, with surprise.

"Sometimes," answered the Colonel, calmly. "Uncle Phil preaches very well, and there is not a holier man living. He has preached to his people forty years. I enjoy listening to him. Major Lewis, will you join Brother Felix and me for a walk?" Then in an undertone he added, "There is no reason why the Major should not participate in our conversation?"

"Not in the least, especially as my message may be of advantage to him as well as to yourself."

They walked back to some benches quite safely remote from the houses. Before taking his seat the Major drew some cigars from his pocket and offering one to the minister, said in his most courteous manner: "Felix, for I can not call you Mr. Grayson, and 'Parson' is a word of reproach in my mouth, won't you join the Colonel and me in a cigar? I remember the last time you were at Elmington, and that we had several pleasant smokes together."

"I do not smoke any more, Major Lewis. I often fancy that a cigar would leave a very pleasant taste in my mouth, but in the North the clergy does not use the weed. We do not think it a sin *per se*, but the sentiment against it is strong. I know it is different down here. With us it is largely a matter of appearance."

"Not very sound doctrine, Felix. If, with the

Catholics, you abstained during certain seasons to mortify the flesh, it would be quite a different affair. As for its influence, that's a debatable question. For instance, when I sit and smoke with Mr. Sexton, who preaches here, I forget or excuse his poor sermons. He squares himself with me every Sunday evening after service, when he is here, with a good cigar."

"I will try to square myself by other means," said Felix. "I came down here to talk with Brother Rodeny on a matter of great importance to him, and he has seen fit to include you in the conversation. It is the prospective emancipation of the slaves. I think the day is not far distant when this will be done. What do the people of the South think of it?"

"Oh, there are all sorts of ideas, but they all arrive at one conclusion, namely, that it will not be done. Most of us are nigger poor, bankrupt with niggers; and some do not care if they are freed, while others love the institution and believe in it. That is the only thing that Rodeny and I continually disagree about. For myself, I believe in negro slavery and our Southern civilization. Rodeny has his doubts about the former, but clings as tenaciously to the latter as I do. So it is all over this Section."

"But has not the threatening attitude of the North affected the slave market?" asked Felix.

"We pay little heed to the market in our parts," answered the Major. "Nobody here ever sells slaves, except Jonas Smith, and for the life of me I don't know where he disposes of the few he has to handle. Everybody I know hates the nigger

trader so tarnally that he is seldom spoken to. You remember Mr. Raymond Hunter, who lived down the pike about two miles from Elmington? His plantation got overstocked with slaves and he bought a big tract of cotton land in Arkansas, going heavily into debt. Well, a big freshet washed away his first crop, and the price dropped on his second, ruining him. He was sold out at bankrupt sale — lands first, by special request, for the Hunters never had sold a slave. The lands did not pay him out, and the negroes were taken to Memphis on the plea that the market was better there, but in fact because Mr. Hunter could not abide the sight of his slaves on the auction-block. I am told that they brought a tolerable price, but not enough to pay him out."

"My purpose in coming down at this time was to beseech Rodeny to dispose of the bulk of his slave property, of course not those to whom he is most attached. But emancipation is surely coming — it's only a question of time — and the loss of so much property at once would be ruinous to you both. Your plantations are overstocked — the negroes are in each other's way, why not sell a portion of them?" said Felix, exhibiting more discretion than he had done in his younger days.

"For myself, Felix," answered the Colonel, "I can not sell a slave. To emancipate them voluntarily, and throw them upon the world would be a crime. My negroes can nearly all read and write, but they are not prepared for liberty, and could not become so in three generations. Our father never was satisfied with the institution, but all his intellect could not devise a solution to the

problem. Bad as he thought the system, the ways out looked even worse. I reckon we shall just have to let events shape themselves, and, if a change comes, shift ourselves to fit it."

"What do you think of my advice, Major Lewis?" asked Felix.

"In results the same as your brother. I am satisfied, only that the negroes are getting so thick and trifling on my plantation that it wears me out to make them grow their own bread and meat. You will excuse me, Felix, but I think you are too much alarmed over the situation. A system so old and thoroughly established can not be overthrown in a day. Slavery was introduced into the country by New England people, and while they have long since abandoned it, I do not believe they will have the hardihood to say that we shall not practice it. They found the climate too severe for the African, sold him to us, and having saved themselves at our expense, will scarcely demand that we throw the property away."

"But, Major, I can not be mistaken in the sentiment of the North. The clergy is a unit, and I am asked to preach on the subject regularly every month. You see they know that I was raised down here and understand the matter thoroughly. I have calls to preach and lecture on it from all over my State."

"We are certainly grateful to you, Felix, for the warning, but you will not press us for an answer to-night," said the Colonel. "The proposed sale of his slaves touches the tenderest chords of the Southern gentleman's heart; besides,

in the case of the Major and myself, there are old family customs and traditions. If there is nothing more to say, we will join the company for the evening's entertainment."

Sunday came, and Uncle Phil gave his best sermon, which for spirituality was a good lesson for the visiting clergyman. Early Monday morning the carriage was driven up, and Felix Grayson, with many and fervent calls upon fraternal goodwill, took his departure.

I

AN ARMY OF PEACE

THE old Southfield turnpike had thronged with returning grey-coats for more than a month. As far as the eye could reach, up and down its winding course, were soldiers in grey — some on foot, some on horses or mules, some in old, creaking wagons, some lying upon the grass by the roadside. They moved or rested in squads of a dozen or so, in pairs, sometimes singly. Many stopped to rest from over-exertion or to soothe in sleep the pangs of hunger to which they were well accustomed, and never awoke.

But they were soldiers only in the color and trimmings of their clothing. There was nothing exciting, nothing precise and military, nothing dramatic on the surface. There was that quiet resignation that only attends silent tragedy of the heart. The customs and traditions of a civilization the most ideal that the world has ever seen had been staked on the single die, war, and the throw was lost.

This broken and jaded procession might have resembled a funeral of one of the gods, only that it lacked the punctuality and dignity of organized, well-managed mourning. There was no blaring of trumpets, no piping of fifes, no beating of drums. An occasional man carried a gun, but it was not a musket, rather an old rifle, a family heirloom, with which his father or grandfather had shot deer when Tennessee was a wilderness.

Scarcely a man spoke. The only sounds one could hear were the heavy, irregular tread on the limestone macadam, the shuffling step of the tired and sick, the creak and rumble of the wagons, and the whinny of a half-famished horse. Only when some one broke from his traveling squad to take one of the off-shooting country roads to reach his home was there a general exclamation; and then a dozen weak, hungry voices would call out: "Good-bye, old comrade; God bless you!" "It may be better than you think!" "Make the best of it!" or something of the like.

The eyes of the men were cast down; their faces, browned and soiled by years of exposure, were sad and anxious. They minded not their own tattered appearance. They were accustomed to that. Their solicitude was for loved ones at home—the same spectre that had haunted camp and march and battle-field for four long years; for now that the strain and distraction of conflict was over, this anxiety became the one engrossing passion. They scarcely noticed the wasted fields, the wrecked buildings, the worn and gullied turnpike.

There was not a trace of resentment or war in any countenance.

This was the remnant of a once splendid army—an army drawn from a people possessed of true military spirit—and to such the verdict of Arms is the voice of Jehovah. While there was hope, they asked no quarter; as hope gave place to desperation, they invited no clemency; when, at last, exhaustion claimed them one and all, they demanded no mercy. To such, defeat is the keenest

chastisement. But, if it were needful to add punishment to the agony of defeat, they stood with bowed heads to receive it.

It was now more than a month since they had accepted, with General Lee, the most magnanimous terms of surrender ever imposed by an unqualified victor; and ever since the dispersal of the insurrection and the capitulation of the Government set up in Richmond, this straggling line of returning soldiers had been continuous. First came the army of Tennessee, such as went out from the Middle States and far West; and they were followed by the men from the magnificent army of Virginia.

There were about a dozen men in the group to which Howard Grayson and Manning Lewis had attached themselves on the eastern slope of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Together they had endured the perils and privations of war, and together they had endured the taunts and humiliations cast upon them during their homeward journey by guerrilla mountaineers. Together they had discussed through many a weary mile the new order of things at home, and had agreed on the peaceful course each should pursue.

Grayson and Lewis were among the first in Middle Tennessee to respond to the confused and hurried call for troops to defend the traditions and rights of their State from supposed assault. For four years they had followed the hazard of their cause with all the enthusiasm of youth and the valor of patriotic breeding; and now they were returning home, their cause crushed, their enthusiasm worked and starved out, but with new

and broader ideas of patriotism. A patriotism not for State or Section alone, but for the whole Country.

Their squad had halted at the divergence of a little country road that led off to the west, by which Grayson and Lewis could reach their old home in a few hours' ride.

A lengthy farewell would have brought a deluge of memories that all instinctively avoided; and, with a shake of hands all around and a hearty "God-speed," the two young men, followed by Pleas, Howard Grayson's negro servant, rode off by themselves.

As they passed over a little hill that cut off their last view of the turnpike and its peaceful army, Manning Lewis broke the silence.

"Well, Howard, the last suggestion of our sufferings has gone out of sight; I wish we could get shut of the memory of them as quickly."

"Yes," replied Howard, "but we can't. I'm not certain yet that we shall want to forget even the miseries of our camp life. If the result is to be what I hope for, and what we may reasonably expect from the terms of surrender, we shall need a bit of sombre in the background to relieve the pleasant recollections we are carrying home."

"There's a plenty of sombre in the background; no trouble about that. Ho, there is a creek and my old Rosinante is so jaded we must stop for water and rest. I wanted to halt at the last creek, but I remembered this little ford and thought we could have a quiet talk together."

They dismounted, took the worn saddles from their horses, turned them over to Pleas, and

threw themselves on the grass at the roadside. For some moments they lay in silence, each deep in his own thoughts. Presently Manning said, without looking at his companion: "Please let me see again your last letter from home."

Howard took from an inside pocket in his coat a carefully wrapped parcel, and selecting the letter asked for, handed it to Lewis. Manning looked a moment at the envelope, and whimsically remarked: "That is a mighty common work of art — that postage stamp. It looks like the label on a bottle of Greenbriar whisky. I reckon it will take rank soon with other relics and curios and become respectable in a collection of old coins, and-so-forth."

"It always was an ugly design, but, you see our people knew little about that sort of thing. Our fellows have cultivated the art of oratory and the science of arms, and have left the practical machinery of life to the Yankees. There is one reason, and the main one, why you and I are riding home on these sorry-looking horses, licked beyond recognition, with coat-sleeves out at the elbows and toes peeping through our shoes. As I look back at it now I wonder that our cause, however righteous, could have stood so long, guarded by such impractical men. If we go home and take hold of life in a businesslike manner, I believe the Southern States will make the practical policy of this country as easily as they have dominated the theoretical part since the first Federal compact was signed."

"Philosophizing again," muttered Lewis, without taking his eyes from the borrowed letter, which

he was now reading for the twentieth time. "That is the best letter Mary Lou has written since we've been out. You notice that she says the last news from the East is more encouraging, but with all that she seems to anticipate the end. These women can better distinguish the hectic flush that precedes death from the bloom of health, a thousand miles from the patient, than we men can right on the ground."

"All of which fine discourse leads up to the subject that has worried me more than any other since we started home," said Grayson. "No fellow ever longed for home more than I do, and yet I dread to meet with Mary Lou. It is hard to stand before a woman with a case of failure on one's hands. Mary Lou has seen this end for more than a year, yet she is right now dying from disappointment. A woman can manage her own defeats, but when one of us falls below grade, it just seems to kill her. She believes you and I have done our little parts well, but she can not realize that any cause we adopt so heartily can fail."

"But Mary Lou is a very reasonable person; she will not complain," put in Lewis.

"That is one more difficulty. She will overwhelm me with affection; first, because it is her nature, and next, because she will be scared lest I discover her mortification. I don't know how to act, for I can't quite study out how the matter will be."

"It will end like those paper-covered novels did that we used to read and carry back and forth — with orange blossoms. I propose to overlook

all the intervening annoyances, and keep my eye fixed on that happy end. Here is your letter, old fellow, let's be going."

They rode in silence most of the afternoon, for every stretch of landscape invoked memories of other times.

It was a glorious day in middle May—that period when nature is most beautiful and promising in the South. They remarked the small number of persons they met by the way, and especially the absence of negroes. As they halted for a few moments in the shade of a giant oak, Pleas said: "I wonders whar all de niggers is, Mars Howard? I ain' seen sech scaceness of niggers in dese parts in all my born'd days."

"I can't tell you, Pleas," answered Grayson. "I reckon they have gone North, or to the cities. Miss Mary Lou wrote me that after the negroes were made free many of them left the plantations and moved to the cities."

"I doan see nothin' dey hed to move," said Pleas with a chuckle, as if he enjoyed the helpless condition of the ambitious freedmen. "Dey better stay whar dey was, with deir marsters and mistises."

The evening was far advanced when they reached the top of the long, high hill that divided the two valleys in which they were born and raised. Down the summit or "backbone" of this hill led the road by which Manning Lewis was to reach his father's house a few miles to the south. The "straight-forward road" brought Howard Grayson into the beautiful and fertile valley of Opal Creek, where Elmington had been famous for

nearly a century as one of the richest plantations in Middle Tennessee.

The view from the rugged old hill-top had been one of the attractions of the neighborhood for years, and before the war hundreds of parties had driven there on picnic occasions to watch the sunset. This was the very season when it was to be seen at its greatest glory. Just across the narrow valley of the Opal the disc of the sun had dropped behind the hills that formed its western boundary; and the jagged, irregular line of the horizon, that followed the peaks and caverns of the range, was ablaze with red and gold. This threatening splendor of color flamed and shot high up the firmament, shading into purple and gray, until all were lost in the peace of infinite blue at the summit of the dome above their heads.

They sat for some moments regarding the familiar scene, forgetting the ardor of their home-going. Then Howard turned and said: "How natural it looks. For the moment I clear forgot that I had been away from home. Here, Manning, is a panorama of our position. The strifes and contentions of the last four years are represented by the fire of the parting day, and all are passing into night and oblivion. The East, whence comes new life and dawn, is all blue and peaceful."

"Very pretty," answered Lewis, "but how about those black thunder-heads that seem to be rolling in over the hills to the north; do they cut any figure in this prophecy?"

"You never did appreciate my philosophy, and I won't waste any more time on you this

evening, especially as my father and sister are waiting for me this very moment. Come, Pleas, let's go."

"Give my best regards to Mary Lou and your father; and tell Mary Lou that I shall give myself the pleasure of calling on her right soon."

"Good-night, Manning. Regards to all the folks."

"Good-night, Howard," and each rode off to resume the family ties, laid aside for those of State four years before.

II

HOME AGAIN

FULL an hour's time was taken in covering the four miles that lay between the forks of the road where Howard Grayson parted with his comrade and his father's house. Impatience, a taint foreign to his breeding and habit, showed itself in a cruel use of whip and spur; and for once he heard not, or heeded not, the admonition of Pleas.

When he drew before the entrance to the house-lot he saw by the dim light that the massive gate was no longer there. It had guarded the place since his earliest remembrance. One great marble post lay prone on the ground; the other toppled wearily.

"I laik t' know who kerried off our gyate an' broke our postes!" said Pleas, in surprise.

"Oh, they have had some war here while we have been in Virginia," answered Howard, as they rode into the yard. Poor Pleas! He had never once thought but that he had seen every skirmish and battle of his day and generation.

As they rode up the winding drive among the trees of the lawn, Howard saw the gleam of a light through the library window; he thought it looked more faint than it used to in the good old times. He sprang eagerly from his saddle and rushed to the front door. It was bolted. He could not remember ever before to have found

that door locked. He recalled the oft-made remark of his father: "Locks and bolts are an evidence of inhospitality; Elmginton has been open for near a century to friend or stranger." To his fiery shake of the knob there was no response save a hollow echo; so he ran to the side of the house, beneath the lighted window and called: "Father, Sister, undo the door! It is Howard!"

For all the anxiety of the moment he noted the childishness of his own voice. He was a captain, and for more than a year had delivered commands in what he thought were tones of authority. That, after all, was assumed; in the presence of his father and sister, in the atmosphere of his childhood, he was a boy again.

His call was answered by a scream of joy from Mary Lou, and the heavy tread of his father coming down the hall to draw the bolts. The door opened.

"Howard! Brother!" cried Mary Lou, springing into his arms.

Then holding the trembling light near, the father looked closely at his son's features and into his eyes for a moment. "Oh, Howard, you are well! Howard is home, and well! Good, good!" he cried. He walked nervously from side to side, holding the hand of his son, and muttering: "This is fine, this is fine!" For once the man of perfect poise was childish. How happily the discipline of a lifetime in overcoming a display of emotions is brought to collapse in one supreme moment like this!

The first greetings over, Colonel Grayson called into the darkness: "Pleas, are you there?" A flash of ivory and the whites of two eyes reflected the dim light of the candle out of the shadows of the night; a voice that broke with sobs, answered: "Yas, suh, Marster, bless de Lawd, I is, thank yo'."

"Good again!" cried the Colonel.

"Howd'y, Pleas" called Mary Lou through her tears.

"Do not try to find the stable, Pleas, but turn the stock loose in the yard; they can do no harm. Then come into the house, I want to shake your hand," said the Colonel.

The father led the way down the great hall that looked strangely vacant and gave forth an echo with every step. In the library they sat down, Howard in the old porch chair, with his father and Mary Lou on either side.

"Now, Brother dear, do not look about this old room, but tell us how you have been. How you look in whiskers! Did — did all the soldiers wear whiskers home?"

"No, Sister. One lieutenant in my company, Lieutenant Lewis — Lieutenant Manning Lewis is his full name and title — got a clean shave this very morning beside the pike, while our horses nipped a little grass. Pleas held him while I performed the operation, and the Lieutenant still lives. Is that enough on the whisker subject?"

"Yes, you dear captain brother. But — but were you sick? Was Pleas sick?"

"I was sick many times, but the hospital record was not honored with our proud and ancient

name. Pleas and the Lieutenant nursed me so carefully that I was not off duty for two days in succession. Pleas had a touch of ague, but he never gave up; he is a resolute fellow in sickness."

"God bless Pleas!" cried the Colonel. "He has been a faithful servant."

"And friend," broke in Howard.

"Yes, my son, a faithful negro is the best and most constant friend a soldier can have. We owe much to them here. They protected your sister from embarrassments when I should have failed; and what little we have left in the house from the old time we owe to their fidelity — often to their duplicity. But I hear Pleas at the kitchen door; I must go and let him in. I cannot rest until I shake his honest black hand, and thank him."

"Bring Pleas in here, Father," said Mary Lou, "I want to see his good old face again."

The scene that came with the meeting of master and slave is one that an artist would shrink from the task of describing. It portrayed one of the mysterious and indescribable conditions of this most idealic civilization — the relations existing between the white master and his black chattel. In vain the world outside of this almost fairy life will try to understand it. In vain genius will struggle to picture it. The condition has vanished, and those who knew it and felt its peculiar charm are passing away.

After a full exchange of greetings, Colonel Grayson said: "Pleas, there is no suitable place for you at the quarters, so you shall have a room in the house as long as you like. The negroes

have all left, except Uncle Phil and Aunt Manda. You understand you are no longer a slave; that you have full liberty."

"Dat's jes' what my young marster been tellin' all de way home, but Pleas doan wan' no lib'ty. I's goin' down an' set dem gyate postes right soon in de mawnin'. I doan wan' no lib'ty. I's de gladdes' nigger yo' err seen to git home with Mars Howard, safe an' soun', an' fine yo' an' Miss Mary Lou jes' as kine an' good as err."

"Well, Pleas, we will talk more of that tomorrow. Mary Lou, have you a candle for Pleas? Good-night, boy. Don't rise too soon in the morning, for you must be in need of rest," said the Colonel, as Pleas left the room.

Father and children talked well into the night, the conversation running on the war as Howard had seen it in the field. Never once were the deprivations and humiliations that had visited the home in his absence alluded to. The eyes of the young soldier wandered about the library, resting from time to time on familiar objects that called up, each in turn, a deluge of happy remembrances.

At last tired nature announced herself in a yawn from Howard, at which the Colonel arose quickly, saying: "We quite forget in our joy of reunion that you are very much exhausted. Go to rest now, my son, and in the morning we will talk of other things."

As Mary Lou arose to bid her brother good-night, and came in the full glare of the sputtering candle, Howard noticed for the first time her dress, which was of homespun cotton dyed with the dull coloring of some native barks. He could

not restrain his surprise, and exclaimed: "Where in the name of the Lost Cause did you get that dress, Mary Lou?"

"Why, Brother, you've completely lost track of styles since you became a captain. You need to study fashion plates. This is the very latest thing—for the South. It is proper, because all the finest ladies of our acquaintance wear the same. Aunt Helen and I spun and wove, not only this, but the cloth for father's Sunday suit. Don't you like it?" she asked, swinging herself around with perceptible pride to give him a full view of the garment.

"It is surely very neat, and fits you more than fairly; but I can not recall my sister in such a dress. Who was the modiste?"

"The manufacturer turns out the whole garment. You did n't think I could make and fit a dress? Have n't you heard the song:—

'This homespun dress is plain, I know,
My hat's palmetto, too,
But then it shows what Southern girls
For Southern rights will do.
We've sent the bravest of our land
To battle with the foe,
And we would lend a helping hand,
We love the South, you know.'

Hurrah! hurrah! for the sunny South, so dear;
Three cheers for the homespun dress the
Southern ladies wear.'"

"Surely, I know those beautiful sentiments and bad poetry well enough, but I never thought of applying them to my own sister. I always knew you were a dear, brave little girl. Good-night,

Mary Lou. Call me early, if I don't come down first, for I want to look about the plantation in the morning."

Again the hall echoed with footfalls, as Colonel Grayson showed his son to his room. "I hope," remarked the Colonel with a tone of apology, "that your life in the field has made you a good sleeper on a poor bed. We had military neighbors many times during your absence, and each succeeding lot seemed most in need of bedding. They have left us very little."

"Oh, I can make that bed do nicely," said Howard. "That's positive luxury by the side of anything I've seen since I last slept in this room. I am so happy at being here that I could sleep like anything on this bare floor. Good-night, Father."

"Good-night, my son; and may the God who has bestowed on us for so many years the incomparable blessing of a happy, contented home be with you."

"Please call me early, Father; I want to look about the place. I reckon there is a plenty of repairing to be done, and I want to get at it right early—don't want to have time to begin to dread it."

"You will find things somewhat changed, and I hope you will not be too much disappointed. New conditions everywhere. You must adjust yourself to them as patiently as possible. Above all, we must not allow these material changes to interfere with our home life—that must be resumed with all its common interest and perfect contentment. Already I feel the return of that

magic spell that hovers about a home filled with reciprocal love and confidence."

"Oh, I'm here to make the best of everything. The boys talked about that all the way home. Things are mighty tough, I reckon; but we shall be happy again, right here. I'm happy, already."

"Yes, I believe it; and your happiness is infectious. Good-night, again, Howard; may you have refreshing sleep."

"Good-night, Father. I'll sleep like a boy."

III

THE ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION

THE sun stood well above the eastern hills when Howard Grayson came down from his room. He gave Mary Lou a reproving look as he kissed her good-morning.

"Oh, I am not afraid of you, you big soldier brother," she said, laughingly. "You needed sleep and I could not think to call you. Wait right here on the porch a few moments and I will call you to a nice breakfast. I would love so dearly to give you some waffles, but the irons are gone. Where? Oh, the Yankee soldiers borrowed them. Don't go off the porch, for if once you begin to look about, there's no place to stop. There come father and Pleas." And off she ran down the hall to the kitchen.

"I hope you feel invigorated with your first night's rest at home," said the Colonel, as he drew near the porch where Howard was stationed to await the call for breakfast.

"First class! Either the bed you were so anxious about, or the old familiar atmosphere, or, more likely, the content of home, made me sleep like a four-year-old. I can hardly wait for breakfast before going out to see where the work of rebuilding shall begin. You seem to have a fine crop of dog-fennel about the house."

"Yes, the contrary stuff has evidently mistaken my efforts at extermination for honest cultivation; two stalks appear for each one I cut down."

"I see that many of our best lawn trees are cut down. Was that the work of the soldiers?"

"Yes, Yankee soldiers. I believe they would have ruined the lawn completely, as they did the rest of the place, if I had not appealed to General Thomas for defence against wanton vandalism. He gave us all the protection we could ask in times of war, and I feel that we owe that great and good man a debt of gratitude which I hope you will some day have an opportunity to acknowledge."

Mary Lou soon appeared, with cheeks red from the kitchen fire, and announced: "Breakfast is served."

While walking down the spacious hall, Howard again noticed the unnaturalness of its appearance and the echo awakened by every footfall. Turning to his sister he asked: "What is there so strange about the house? This hall does not look as it used to."

"There is nothing new to me here. Oh, it is the carpets and rugs. The soldiers said they needed them for the colonel's tent and that they had orders to take them. We never argued with those soldiers. Father offered the colonel a room in the house, which his excellency declined, saying he thought his men could make him more comfortable where he was. Our rugs contributed to that comfort."

"Did you save anything from such fellows?" asked Howard. "I looked for some of my clothes, but could find none. I'm tired of this tattered uniform for everyday wear—I want to keep it for state occasions."

"Too bad, Brother, but the soldiers carried off all that was any good; the rest I gave to the negroes to keep them comfortable. We could buy them nothing, you know. Our silver and jewelry have been saved, through the fidelity of Uncle Phil," she continued. "I do not know where he has them, but you know Uncle Phil can be relied upon to fetch them out whenever we want."

"I should like to run back to his cabin and embrace Uncle Phil and Aunt Manda right now. What faithful creatures they have been."

Breakfast was a very meagre affair, judged by the old-time standard at Elmington. In spite of all the devastation and barbarism of war the earth still brought forth, and fresh strawberries made a very enticing relish for the corn bread and turnip-greens that followed. The conversation turned upon the subject of rebuilding, although Howard did not then know the extent of his task; not once was any reference made to the thin meal.

"The gods suffer, and are silent."

"You can not know how relieved I am to have this trouble over—decided—and to be back home again," said Howard. "I have been thinking over our conversation of last night, and while I know everything will be different from what we are used to, different from what we hoped for and from what I expected; yet we can suit ourselves to the new conditions, we can adjust ourselves to the new civilization, and again be happy."

"I can part with the old civilization more easily than you; not because I did not love it, but because for a long time I have foreseen its probable

destruction. The overthrow of slavery takes a load from my conscience, though I can not help studying about what will become of the poor ignorant black under the burden of his newly acquired liberty. ‘The rights of citizenship’ means more than liberty before the law; it has a practical side that means meat and bread for the citizen and those dependent upon him. There are plenty of people ready to instruct the freedman in his political rights, but who will feed him?’

“He can work as he always has done, only he will draw pay and buy his necessities,” answered Howard, hopefully.

“Well, we shall see,” said the Colonel, as they left the house to look about the plantation.

Father and son walked down through the house-lot to the blue-grass pastures. On the way they passed the orchard, that covered more than ten acres of ground, in which not a dozen trees were standing. Apple, peach, and cherry trees all had fallen before the sweep of vandal hands. The horse barn, once the pride of the plantation, was a wreck. Only its frame, gaunt as a skeleton, stood in its ruin to speak of departed magnificence. No doors swung upon the rusted hinges, no strip of siding remained. Everything combustible that could be removed with little effort had gone to feed camp-fires.

“Why did they not leave the stable to protect their stock?” asked Howard.

“I can not answer you, my son. They seemed only to think of themselves and the easiest way of keeping warm. They evidently did not love a horse as Tennesseans do.”

The turf of the blue-grass pastures, the joy of every plantation in Tennessee, was torn and furrowed, and great patches of weeds marked the locations of innumerable fires.

"These fields were occupied three different times as a camp by Federal soldiers. The second set was much more wasteful than the first, and the last seemed bent on utter destruction. This pasturage is ruined and can not be reclaimed in ten years."

"We shall have to crop it to get shur of these weeds. I reckon the grass will set again," said Howard, determined to be hopeful even in the face of complete destruction.

Every gate was gone, great rents in the stone walls that had stood for nearly a century showed that the enemy had been malicious. The site of the once great fodder-barn was marked by a swamp of foul stuff of monstrous growth.

The rich bottom fields on which had grown corn and cotton each year since the place was first cleared up, now showed a crop of willow sprouts shoulder-high.

On every turn the young soldier uttered a fresh exclamation of surprise and horror as a new atrocity met his sight. Everything was in ruin—rank, helpless, disheartening ruin. A less hopeful spirit would have dropped before the almost impossible task of rebuilding; but each item of waste seemed to stimulate his determination, and as they turned homeward he said: "We shall have all these things to rights again. I'll make a start this afternoon on the garden wall. We must raise our own vegetables."

"Why spend time at present on the garden wall? There is nothing to trespass. I do not know of a hoof of sheep, cattle or swine in the whole neighborhood," said his father.

"That's true. Well, I'll plant some more garden, then."

"But my son, we have no seed — except some corn."

"Then I'll plant corn, for I am bound to begin work to-day, sure. I reckon we shall have no trouble in hiring negroes."

"With the consent only of the Freedmen's Bureau. But you forget that we have little money with which to pay help."

"Then we will let them make a crop for a share," cried the son, full, as he thought, of worthy expedients.

"I do not like to discourage you, Howard, but there is still an obstacle in the way. The negroes will need to have their living advanced, either in money or provisions, until the crop is made. We are poor in both of these indispensables."

"Then I'll plant corn and rebuild the stone wall by myself. The work will go slowly, but Elmington shall be rebuilt, if I have to do every lick myself."

They turned to go back to the house, Howard setting the course so that they should pass the family shrine, where all that was mortal of his mother was laid away. The massive stone and mortar wall that surrounded this sacred acre had been torn open, and the plain granite shaft had been used, day after day, as a target for unseemly rifle practice. The emblem of enduring love was

nicked and defaced by a hundred well-aimed bullets. The young soldier hung his head.

"Is nothing sacred in war?" he said, at last.
"No, Father, war is nothing in all the world but systematic rowdyism. I'm sick of it."

IV

REBUILDING BEGINS

IS there such a thing in the house as a lead pencil, Mary Lou?" asked Howard after he came back from an hour's inspection of the plantation and had seated himself in the kitchen.

"Don't embarrass me by calling for such luxuries," she answered, naïvely.

"You must forgive me, but I've been spoiled by being in touch with a most bountiful commissary. All I have had to do was to call for whatever I needed or wanted, and then not get it. You ought to have seen our stores toward the last; there was not a strip of side-meat as big as one of your little hands, nor meal enough to make a corn dodger. But seriously, I must do some writing, if possible."

"We have some elderberry ink and quill pens, if you can make them do. There is no paper in the house except some pages from old blank-books such as we have been using for letter-writing."

"That will do nicely, only I prefer the blank-book, if you can spare me one from your voluminous correspondence."

"You must not speak lightly of my letter-writing, for I have a pleasant surprise for you in two letters that I have received since my last to you. Oh, you may look curious, but I shall punish you by not showing them now, nor even tell-

ing the name of my correspondent. Here is an old diary for the year 1859, with some of your own entries in it. Listen: ‘January 1st. Went calling with Manning. Had a great time. Went to a New Year’s party in the evening at ____.’” She stopped suddenly, for she saw that her teasing had brought unexpected pain, and laying her hand on his shoulder, she said: “Forgive me, Brother, I did not think to hurt your feelings.”

“That’s nothing, Little Sister. I reckon I showed more than I feel. But you are bound to know sooner or later, that though I have passed through plenty of scraps without a scratch, this cruel business has left a wound, and without thought you brushed it. When it suits your fancy I’ll listen to your surprise; for the present, I’ll take the diary, if you are willing, but it won’t serve my purpose. I want to make some memoranda for permanent use, and then have the rest of the book for a kind of journal. The remnant of that old ledger will answer.”

Without further ado, Howard Grayson seated himself before the table to make the first business programme of his life.

The product of an hour’s deliberation and self-communion was a *seriatim* schedule of what he proposed to do on the plantation. He was desperately earnest and wanted to be practical.

Be that as it may, the ten items disclosed only one state of temper, resignation; only one purpose, to rebuild the home.

At this juncture Colonel Grayson entered the room, and Howard with the confidence of childhood submitted to him the written page.

"That does you credit, my son," he said, after reading it over carefully. "If only the politicians leave us alone we shall have no trouble in carrying your programme into effect. But do not think too intently on temporal rebuilding. We may work like our negroes used to work, but we must not neglect those little matters of heart that made the civilization of the old South the best and most refined that the world has ever seen. Along with our labors let us give time and thought and feeling to rebuilding the home with its countless loves and confidences. Let us keep that first in mind, always present in deed, and our daily toil will ennable us."

"I used to think that work, common drudgery in sweat and dirt, disgraceful, or undignified at least; but when I read that programme the prospect of making Elmington again beautiful inspires me, and I want to get at it directly. I don't care for a little perspiration, 't will do me good. Can you get me the seed corn?" And he put away the book containing a schedule of his good intentions, to begin without further preliminary the battle of life as a working man.

His father brought the seed, and hoe in hand, Howard started out to plant; but when they came to the garden the ground was not plowed, and his father had to tell him that there was not a harness nor a piece of plow gear on the plantation. So item number one was passed temporarily, and, as the young man's determination burned too fiercely to brook delay, he made straight for the rent in the garden wall.

The blocks of stratified limestone of which this

fence was built were wondrous heavy, and the primitive hand-spike cut from a hickory sapling did weak and springy service. Hands browned by the sun and hardened by the bridle rein soon bore marks of unusual toil. Muscles developed in field sports and gentlemanly exercises responded with a vigorous spurt to the dictates of a better trained will, but were unable to furnish sustained force. The sun boiled down, was reflected back, and enshrouded the laborer with quivering, stifling heat.

But for all that he toiled on, deaf to the admonition of his father, who gave much counsel to the work and such help as his physical infirmities allowed. In the middle of the forenoon Mary Lou came out with a bucket of water and a dish of fresh strawberries. Only then did the ardor of the work abate, and Howard seated himself on the rebuilt portion for rest and refreshment.

"My poor, dear brother," exclaimed Mary Lou, "your hands are all torn and bleeding, and look at that great blister! Do leave this old fence alone, and let some negro do it. This is no work for you. You would not think of asking Pleas to do it. Let it go, for nothing will come through; besides, you have not been back to see Uncle Phil and Aunt Manda yet."

With a woman's instinct she had read the newly developed material spirit in her brother, although she had not been intrusted with the secret of his written resolutions. To argue the question was to fan the fire of his determination; but his love for the faithful old mammy of his babyhood, and the suggestion that he had neg-

lected her made an unanswerable appeal. He struggled a moment with his business programme, and then said: "Sure enough, I ought to have gone to see them before I ate breakfast. That was my first duty after greeting you and father. After a little we'll all walk back to the cabin and surprise them, for they don't know yet that I am home."

But they were scarcely seated when a horseman came round a bend in the pike, and Howard cried: "Oh, there comes Major Lewis, and on Manning's old horse. Is n't that fine stock for a Middle Tennessee gentleman to ride? I would be glad to know where Manning is."

Before the Major took Howard's outstretched hand, he spoke to Mary Lou and raised his broad-brimmed hat in old-time courtesy. Then, alighting from his saddle, he returned the hearty greeting of young Grayson with all the warmth of his genial nature.

He presented a strange figure in his homespun suit. The coat was cut double-breasted, the skirts reaching to the baggy knees of his trousers, and conforming to his life custom, only the lower button did service. The lapels flared back as if ashamed to keep company with his coarse cotton shirt-front.

In better days he had been of punctilious habit in dress, never extravagant or conspicuous, but, after his own peculiar taste in cut and texture, uniformly well clothed. Now all was changed, yet there was in his bearing no suggestion of apology for this uncouth garb. His lean, wiry form stood erect, his face and manner bespoke

that utter oblivion to material surroundings that marks the gentleman of the old school.

If his presence spoke aught, it said: "These clothes comply with legal and moral requirements, they were paid for with the sweat and blood of my dear wife, now grown old in my companionship, and I am not ashamed of them."

Looking about with marked deliberation, first at each member of the family and then on the spread of surrounding desolation, he said: "We just had to come over and witness the reunion of the Grayson family, and I'm not disappointed — you all look happy. Surely this is a beautiful picture, set in a frame of such complete destruction. Looks like I discover another rose in Miss Mary Lou's cheek. The sun? No, it's the brother! Mrs. Lewis sends her compliments, but could not come; the walk was too long and there was no possible contrivance by which she could ride. Manning and I came 'ride and tie,' and it was my ride last. I reckon he'll get in directly. The Captain is looking remarkably well, Rodeny."

"I am in perfect health, Major Lewis, and many thanks are due Manning for that," said Howard. "He exposed himself times enough to save me, always before I knew it. And let me tell you right now, for he never would speak of it, my promotion before him was an accident — a surprise to both of us. I did not deserve it above him, which our superiors afterward saw and tried to correct by offering him a company on two occasions, but he wanted to stay with me — nominally my inferior in rank."

"Manning has not mentioned it to me, but there could be no rivalry between the Graysons and the Lewises," said the Major.

"And so history repeats itself," said Colonel Grayson. "It was so with Major Lewis and me in the Mexican war. I received the promotion he deserved. Your statement, Howard, and Manning's silence, do equal credit to you both."

"But the question of our respective promotions away back yonder has been one of dispute between us so long that it is not worth while to renew it now," said the Major. "The most important subject, now that our families are reunited, is that of meat and bread—a mighty mean problem for gentlemen to be studying at. Makes me feel like a Yankee already. I just naturally hate it, but what's to be done? Have any of your niggers got back?"

"None," answered Colonel Grayson, "and if they had, I don't reckon we could work them without the consent of the Freedmen's Bureau."

"And that charitable institution has too many religious men deviling with its management to be entirely above my suspicion," put in the Major. "I don't want a thing to do with those preachers. Every man I know of, or have heard spoken of in connection with it, is a Reverend. On the outside it is Rev. So-and-so; and I understand that between themselves it is Brother So-and-so, and some of them even 'Brother' the nigger."

"They may intend to do a good work, and I hope they will. In any event they take a great burden from us, for you know that freeing the negro without preparation for his liberty always

has been a serious business with me. Perhaps they will undertake, and eventually accomplish, this very work, although I do not see how they can do it. We shall not be held responsible for it, anyway," said Colonel Grayson.

"They can't do it, and are making a sham at trying. They only expect to control the nigger so as to use him after he becomes a citizen. Hear my prophecy: The nigger will be a voter in less than five years, and who knows but he will be sitting on juries in the County Court, or even in the Legislature. This is not to be a white man's country any more." Some people had called the Major a pessimist; others had long regarded him a prophet.

"Most of the Freedmen's Bureau managers are very impractical and wild in their theories, as I have learned from my half-brother, Felix Grayson. They expect to educate the negro in a short time and make him independent in spirit. Of course Felix understands the black man well enough to know better than that. He ridicules his own work. And, by the way, he has visited us several times lately, has been quite confidential and shown a very friendly spirit. He has offered to buy Elmington, or to lend me money on it."

"The same thing in the end. Do you know, Rodeny, I've been studying over this matter of going into debt for the putting of Fairfax to rights, and I'm against it. We shall patch up a little here and there, and eventually, some sweet day, the plantation will be in good shape again. I'm in no great hurry to fix up. Man-

ning and I can't work much land, anyway; and then I need something to cuss about. Every time I see a piece of waste I propose to stop then and there and bless those damned invading Yankee scoundrels. Excuse my language, Miss Mary Lou, it was a slip of the tongue, I assure you."

"The sentiment was fine, Major Lewis; the language good for a man," she answered.

"I don't reckon the Federal soldiers did any worse than we would have done, if we had had the chance," said Howard.

"Possibly not, Captain; but my ox would not have been gored in that event. You see the question is, 'Whose ox?'"

"Never mind the ox; there comes my comrade, the finest fellow and the best soldier that lives," cried Howard, waving his old cap in welcome as Manning Lewis came in sight a hundred yards down the pike.

"If Mrs. Lewis were only here, how much it would seem like old times," said Colonel Grayson. And they all sat down on the lawn to plan together for the future; not entirely for the needs that confronted them, but because this occupation took their minds from contrasting the present with their former condition.

V

THE NEW MAN

THE Federal soldier who had followed the beck of his country, had left family and comfortable fireside, had endured the merciless horrors of war, had shed his blood and carried scars, wounds, broken health or shattered constitution—all without complaint—returned to his home after the insurrection was crushed and peace was restored, to resume the old ties of family and civility. He believed that his late foe never had been his personal enemy, that they had entertained differences of opinion and each had sought to maintain his position, but now they were again, and more securely than ever before, brothers and fellow-citizens.

The Southern soldier, in his turn, went back to his devastated home and broken home-circle, accepting with philosophic resignation the issues of the conflict, anxious to take up and straighten out the tangled thread of citizenship.

This splendid condition followed by natural sequence the magnanimous terms of surrender—terms applauded by the victor, appreciated by the vanquished. It promised to realize the hope of the war administration as expressed by Mr. Lincoln in every public utterance in which he made allusion to the subject. The return of peace and good-will was almost accomplished. Those who had fought wanted peace. They expected it.

But strange to relate, yet natural as the succession of seasons, all this fine sentiment was brushed rudely aside by an unexpected appearance. A new type of man sprang suddenly into life, or into prominence, in the South, ready-made to take and fill certain responsibilities. This man had not had his day. So long as a gun was pointed at a blue-coat, he had remained in seclusion. He only burst the eclipse and came forth from his skulking when the sword was returned to its peaceful scabbard. The uncertainties of war had not offered him a fit chance to show his peculiar virtue, for it was of a kind that shone not in the heat of conflict. The blaze of artillery, the whistle of bullets, the shriek of shells—in fact, all the useless excitement and hurly-burly of battle—would have dimmed the splendid effulgence of his valor. His special bravery could not be allowed now to burn itself into invisible vapor, after having smouldered so long in healthy retirement. This tardy patriot must have his day. He demanded it.

Besides, the men who had borne the burden of warfare were footsore. With the advent of peace their employment was gone, and new blood was needed to bring affairs to a suitable ending.

Then there arose in certain quarters the feeling that the break from war to peace would be too abrupt for the good of the country, that a season of half and half was desirable.

Accordingly, the business of Reconstruction, as a local or State measure, was brought into being out of nothing; and so shaped by those who begat it, that it should tally with that special genius which was the sole and singular property of this

New Man. His abilities matched by a becoming undertaking, there was developed in his breast a restless love of united Country, and a consuming hate of the very memory of insurrection or insubordination that approached the farthest border of mania. He swarmed about the capitols of the several Southern States, bulging such frothy patriotism a child could have seen that his loyal spirits were in the first stage of fermentation.

This slave of public weal needed only an opportunity to show his newly acquired mettle, now that danger was past, and his persistent and shameless clamor placed him in control of nearly every legislative body in the South. True, his record as camp-follower, guerrilla, stay-at-home, or "I-told-you-so," might have stood against him in any enterprise, except Reconstruction. The disqualifications for this undertaking are not found in the catalogue of felonies and misdemeanors.

And now that the miracle of Creation was accomplished, and the propagation of patriotism confronted this new species, it was perfectly natural for the members to divide themselves into proper grades and classes. This came about by the operation of the desired and long sought "Merit System." Those most gifted by nature for self-sacrifice, the crying virtue of the time, were pushed rapidly to the front, each by his own exertions, to become leaders and organizers.

Those in whom this stale leaven of patriotism had not made such violent and frothy rising, assumed their proper places without murmuring in the middle and rear ranks. They wanted only to be useful, and they could see, out of their abun-

dant wisdom, that it is a weak enterprise that presents all its forces in the front rank. From this subaltern class arose sheriffs, constables, officers of courts, spies, and doers of dirty work on short notice.

And over and above all, the ruling hand and spirit—yea more, the very political godfather in Tennessee of this New Man, with all his allied and collateral following, was Kellogg G. Simon, Governor. Not only was his approval of all distressing legislation necessary, but his peculiar genius was almost constantly invoked to suggest plans by which the limit of torment could be reached. In order to keep enactments abreast of his inventive virulence, the Legislature was almost constantly in session; and, judged by the volume of business transacted, it was either sorely over-worked or extremely capable and dextrous. And as each parcel of folly or malice received its solemn and portentous decree, in the singular energy and unflagging acrimony of the Governor lay its suitable execution.

This strange adaptation of the man to conditions and conditions to the man was little short of foreordination, and he wielded his power with the fanatical assurance of Divine Right.

The Legislature for the great Volunteer State was in session in Nashville as this history begins. It was composed largely of the first crop of these creatures; malignant, bold, aggressive, blatant—for the enemy had laid aside his arms. Every act that their stupidity could invent tending to the spiteful humiliation of the Southern soldier, was placed upon the statute books without the show

of sincerity that comes with reasonable deliberation.

"Is it irritating, virulent, vicious?" seems to have been their only question. In their mad haste to exasperate they overlooked every other consideration, even the commonest rules of English grammar.

Every law that could operate as an obstacle to the peaceful return of the vanquished to the rights and privileges of citizenship, found ready passage. Not only was the ballot box surrounded by conscienceless and senseless barriers that he could not scale had he been disposed to try, but his right to walk and ride in the public highway was attacked. The quiet rebuilding of his home, even the sanctity of his home, the planting of crops for the sustenance of his family, and the privilege of public worship of God, all, and more, were made subjects of malevolent interference.

Such, in the abstract, was the New Man.

The creation was original, unique, well-timed; but for the South, unfortunate. I say well-timed, for at no other period of the Country's history could he have attained prominence. Conditions favored for a moment and he was brought forth into the breach, and there played such infamy that no history of the time is complete without his story.

VI

THE NEW MAN IN ACTION

THE scenes witnessed in Nashville as the returning soldiers assembled and dispersed were more distressing than had been enacted there at any time during the war. There is to active warfare certain splendor and pomp that spreads a glamour over its hideous face. But Peace that follows in the train of all this glittering majesty — white-winged and beautiful though it be described — presents a drama concentrating the horrors of all the preceding campaigns.

The armies of peace, both blue and grey, were there, and their torn and bleeding remnants exceeded the number of those in arms within its gates at any time during the four years of war. And in all this throng there was no vengeance. When the band, a part uniformed in blue, a part in grey, played as it marched through the streets, it alternated the breezy air of "Yankee Doodle" with the inspiring strains of "Dixie." The tattered soldier in grey walked arm in arm with his late foe in blue. Brothers here met and were reunited; old friendships dropped four years before were resumed, and the misery everywhere visible was softened by the gracious spirit of good-will.

The world never has seen another such exhibition of impersonal patriotism as when the participants in this great war of four awful years' duration were transformed in a day to fellow-

citizens and personal friends. The victor and the vanquished met, the one without gloating, the other without rancor. Love of country had prevailed over hate of institution on the one hand, over love of institution on the other. It was an ideal condition, a beautiful lesson in forbearance; but the picture was destroyed, the lesson spoiled. Times were too practical, opportunities too great, to permit the indulgence of the ideal. This spreading fraternity threatened the future plans of the New Man; and therein lay the motive for all that show of virulence at a time when forgiveness was the manly part.

To the New Man nothing could be more aggravating than the prospect of a reunited people, a common country. This state of affairs if allowed to continue, would render his projected occupation worthless, and the rich fields for patriotic exploitation would turn to desert before his hungering eyes.

The wounds, the empty sleeves, the rude crutches, the famished countenances, and the innumerable other marks of human suffering that met him at every turn, made no appeal. If, indeed, he treated at all with the subject of this misery, he dismissed it with the one proposition: "The Federals will draw pensions, the Rebels will suffer; both will get their deserts." He could afford to indulge this kind of philosophy, he had wounded no soldiers. The houses and barns he had burned, the defenceless women and children he had terrified, and his other characteristic military performances—all done under cover of night—had prepared him for such practical

conclusions. In fact, this kind of warfare had so shaped and set his predisposed temperament and conscience, that misery only excited his ghoulish greed, and fraternity only fired his peculiar martial spirit.

The Governor's office was the rendezvous for the New Man. Here he thronged, here he discoursed on treason as if it were a new crime and he the discoverer, here he contrived to save the country after his own peculiar methods; and, when his plans had been reduced to a system and had been duly incorporated into the laws of the land, here he came for instruction in methods of speedy and pestiferous execution.

One morning a little past the middle of July, Jonas Smith, Sheriff, was among the early callers at the Governor's office. He had come to the Capitol for special instructions on some recent legislation, and particularly regarding a bill that had passed both branches of the Legislature the night before and now lay on the Governor's desk for approval.

The Governor rose to shake hands as Smith entered the room, and thus presented the full outline of his figure before the window. His was no common personality: Full six feet in height, erect, raw-boned, vigorous in action, alert in repose. Every movement proclaimed self-confidence. His features were sharp cut and angular; his hard, gray eye flashed the internal fires of revenge and hate that were extinguished only when the wild spirit left the rough body. His dress was loose and flabby, after the custom of the back-country people, and his massive hand

showed the manual toil that had been his early heritage.

The leading quality of his character was imperiousness, which, without the softening and restraining influence of good breeding, had become intolerably overbearing. Born to poverty, reared to a struggle for daily bread, he early espoused the notion that the world's economics were ill adjusted, and that he was the victim; and he waged, all his life, a warfare on those more lucky or more successful in material affairs than himself as if he had inherited a grudge against good fortune.

So also it was in religious and political affairs. He never rose above the plane of attack, and in the controversies which had consumed most of his time for a quarter of a century, he never rose above the plane of personalities. In conversation, though prolific in ideas of his own sort, he never could elevate his forms of speech above the common slang of his times.

In fact, his whole character might be summed up in the single statement that he represented the most forceful, and perhaps the most capable, of that type of man who spends his life in creedal, professional and political controversies.

But, with all his brute force and human malice, there yet remained one quality that commanded respect; he possessed either personal courage or bravado to such a degree that it passed for courage in the estimation of the world.

Familiar with all the dialects, and especially with that of the country people living in the backwoods districts, he addressed the Sheriff in his own tongue, that spoken by a rather indefinite

class named by the negroes, "poor white trash."

"How'dy, Smith, when did you get in?"

"How'dy, Gov'nor, how'dy. Jest come, Gov'nor, jest got in. Rid all night, so's to git here right soon of the mornin'. Got yore o'ders 'bout three o'clock yesterday evenin', an' saddled up my ole mar' an' pulled out. As soon as Jordan handed me them papers I knowed in reason some-thin' powerful hed happened. Sara Ann, that's my wife, did n't want me to come a bit, but I said to her, 'Sarah Ann, the Gov'nor has sent fo' me an' I'm agoin', an' that's the word with the bark on hit.' When I laid the law down to her she knowed I meant business. If a fellow's a-goin' to do a thing, he orter do hit, Gov'nor, and not be meally mouthed about hit. I brought four deputies along fo' company. Sorter feared to ride along by myself; made heaps of enemies by executin' them last o'ders yo' sent down thar, but I doan stan' back on no o'ders. O'ders is o'ders down in my country, Gov'nor, and I wants mo' of 'em. I ain't afraid to execute no o'ders." And his lingo would have continued interminably had not the Governor broken it with a question.

"Is everything quiet with you, Smith?"

"Yas, if anything, too quiet. The soldiers air a-comin' back home an' goin' to work again. Them ole aristocrats are workin' on their plantations jest like so many niggers use' to. An' they doan look to be ashame' of hit, neither. They air licked, but they doan show hit. They hol' their hails jest as high as ever. I would like mighty well to git o'ders that would learn 'em a lesson. They treated me mighty onery befo' the

war when I was tryin' to make a hones' livin', an' I wants o'ders that'll reach to them now."

"Well, I have a bill before me that will reach them and give you all the satisfaction you need," said the Governor. "This bill passed the Senate last night with only two dissenting votes, and in the House there were only five votes against it. It only needs my signature, and while it is fresh in my mind I'll sign, and end the agony." And without more ado the Governor affixed his bold autograph to the measure. "There, that will give you and several other officers congenial business for the next month."

"What is the law fo,' Gov'nor, an' what does hit say to do?" asked the willing officer.

"It is a law to prevent the wearing of that accursed Rebel uniform. We don't propose to have secession stalking about in clothes, even."

"Now yo' air a-talkin', that's jest what we want, Gov'nor. Yo' need hit here mighty bad, too. I never seen anything like the 'free lovin' that is a-goin' on here in Nashville. I met up with more'n a dozen Rebels an' our boys a-walkin' arm in arm, like they was brothers. Thet doan 'pear right to me. After we hev fought so hard an' long to crush out this cussed secession, to hev our soldiers a-walkin' with Rebels on their arms jest like thar never was no war, seems mighty pore business to me, Gov'nor," said the patriotic Jonas.

"This bill must put an end to all such foolishness," said the Governor, with a knowing look in his cold eye. "We can not put it into effect here in Nashville, because there are too many of our

soldiers here who have made up with the Rebels. But out in the country I expect to have it rigidly enforced, if it puts every Rebel soldier in jail, where he belongs."

"I knows right whar to begin at, an' whar hit will do the mos' good. Give me o'ders, Gov'nor, how yo' wants this law executed an' then look out fo' reports from ole Williams County."

"It takes immediate effect," said the Governor. "They are entitled to no notice and I will give them none. You are to begin at once. The penalty is from five to twenty-five dollars for privates, and twenty-five to fifty dollars for officers, and our judges understand that we want the full limit of the fine. All you have to do is to arrest every person you see with that accursed grey suit on, and land him in jail. If they offer any resistance, declare riot, call out the County Guards and suppress it, but land the Rebel. I will furnish all the troops you need to enforce the law and keep the peace. The judges of the courts are instructed about bail. No one can act as bondsman who can not take the 'test oath.' Now keep me advised from time to time how you are making out."

"I reckon I can make out to fill o'ders, Gov'nor, without a-callin' on yo' fo' troops," answered the sheriff in all confidence. "Yo' know wehev about two hundred in our County Guards an' they air with me on o'ders. If that is all, Gov'nor, I'll be a-goin', fo' I am wantin' to feed my ole mar', start back an' git at this work right soon. I know whar to begin, Gov'nor, I know whar to begin. Good-day, Gov'nor."

"Good-bye, Smith, and mind, let me have an early report."

Several persons were waiting in the ante-room, and as the sheriff went out, the old negro Sam, who did service as major-domo, announced the name of Rev. Mr. Grayson. "Admit him," said the Governor.

"I am right glad to see you, Grayson," said the Governor. "I was thinking just now I would like to have a talk with some of you Bureau fellows regarding your work. I have heard that you are to have a parcel of teachers, or sort of missionaries, down here from the North to educate the niggers. Is that right?"

"I believe so, Governor," answered Felix, in his non-committal way. "In fact the first lot of them is due to arrive next week. They are to be placed about, I understand, at the different stations of the Bureau to conduct schools, and help in religious exercises."

"But I am told they are for the most part young ladies who have volunteered to come down here as missionaries, presumably without pay."

"So I understand, Governor, 'without money and without price.' It is certainly a very noble work, especially their efforts to elevate the religious standard of the unfortunate colored man," said Grayson, with ministerial affectation.

"You were born in the South, I believe, Grayson?" enquired the Governor, quickly. The conversation was approaching an argument, and he drifted naturally toward personalities.

"Yes, Governor, I have lived here a good bit of my life," Grayson answered, imperturbably.

"Then you know what folly this missionary business is. There is something mawkish and morbid about it, as applied to this matter. When I was in the North they told me of young ladies having Chinamen in their Sunday-school classes, trying to convert and Christianize them. In some cases the teacher was converted, for she ran away and married Mr. John. Somehow this missionary talk calls to mind those stories. But what is to be the result of all this schooling—what is it for? Do those politicians at Washington intend to make a voter of the negro?"

"I can not tell you, Governor," answered Grayson. "They have disclosed no plans for the future to us; they only issue instructions from day to day."

"Oh, of course not. It is a political move, and for a good purpose—to control the vote of the South. But it will be foolish to enfranchise the nigger, and unnecessary. If other States will follow my lead in providing for voters, 'test oaths' and 'amnesty bills' of the right kind, we'll keep these Rebels where they belong until they die, and then they'll just naturally go where they belong. I don't need any nigger vote."

"I had not even suspected that such was the ultimate purpose of all this school-teaching, but perhaps it is. I thought it was a purely religious move, for the spiritual good of the negro; and while I sometimes questioned the good sense of it as a religious measure, I gave those engaged in it credit for honesty of purpose," said the evasive Felix.

"These teachers may be honest, but they are

deluded. You see the politicians had to work the religious dodge to get volunteers. But this is a bad business. The black man must emigrate—we shall have to colonize him. It is impossible for the two races to live together as equals before the law. The negro has been a servant, a slave, since Mr. Ham had a row with his father and wandered off down into Africa to populate the jungles. Every effort to raise him above that condition has been a failure. You can't put into him the spirit of personal independence that is essential to a citizen."

"I hope the experiment will not be made, for it might make trouble again in the South. Negro equality would be very aggravating to the people down here, at this time," said Grayson.

"That's the only thing in favor of it. If you hear anything further about the matter, I wish you'd let me know," said the Governor in a way of his own, that never failed to be understood as meaning, "this interview is closed," and without further talk Grayson withdrew.

VII

THE OLD, OLD STORY

AFTER much contriving and joining together of odd parts, the Lewises and Graysons found that a work-harness sufficient to gear one horse to a plow could be raised between the two families. Their sky took on a rosy tinge. A harvest, plentiful to their famished eyes, seemed more than a promise to the young men. The dismal possibilities of late seed-time, or untoward drought, or the numberless other haps, cast no cloud. They understood full well the necessities of their condition, and were willing to work. Why should they not trust the returning bounty of Mother Earth? For once Major Lewis restrained his blunt satire, and allowed them, unhampered by suggestion of mischance, to figure on a certain crop.

"I'll toss a coin with you, Manning, to see who has the first day's work with the patchwork outfit," said Howard.

"But where will you get the coin?" asked Major Lewis, quickly.

"That's true, where?" answered Howard, so dejectedly that all burst into a hearty laugh at his expense.

"No, Howard, we'll take no chances on the first use of the horse and plow. You have most enthusiasm and shall have the first lick at the work. If you like I'll come over and lend a hand," said Manning.

"Just like you again," cried Howard. "Well, come over to-morrow morning and I'll show you how to make a corn crop. Don't forget those straps, or we shall have no harness."

Mary Lou now excused herself from the group, saying that she must prepare dinner.

"May I walk to the house with you, Miss Mary Lou, and get a drink?" asked Manning.

"Certainly," she answered, "I need a bucket of water from the spring, and you shall have a drink for fetching it."

"Don't give him a mint julep, Miss Mary Lou. If there are any juleps in that spring, I'll go for the water," said the Major. "That's another thing we've lost in this cussed war. I never did drink much liquor, but when I want a julep and can't get it, I feel like I'm in the dentist's chair."

As they withdrew, Manning Lewis, for the first time in his life, felt embarrassed in her presence. By reason of the long friendship between their families, they had grown up together from childhood to a perfect exchange of confidences. In fact each had felt for years that the time would come when the union of the Lewises and Graysons would be made complete through their marriage. Yet, prosy as it may be to admit it, no word or intimation ever had passed between them on the subject.

She saw at once the cause of his hesitation and tried to avert the disclosure by opening the conversation in a way that would turn his attention. "How tired one gets of all this talk of crops. Shall we have no other subject for conversation in the future? Crops are necessary, but shall our

thoughts never again soar higher than the tassels on our corn? Is this the modern civilization that is to be introduced into the South?" But he answered in an incoherent manner that showed he scarcely understood her remarks. He cleared his throat and moved his lips, but no sound came forth. His voice never had failed him when he urged a hundred men to the charge, but now he felt the presence of a spirit stronger than all theirs. So they walked on in silence, her burning face hidden in the depths of her sunbonnet, her eyes fixed on the ground.

At last he took a new tack and blundered out: "I wanted to write to you, Miss Mary Lou, after I got my promotion."

"Oh, brother wrote us all about it, Manning. We knew of it by the first post, and all about the services that brought the promotion. Howard wrote us very often, as you no doubt know." She answered with such apparent composure that his embarrassment was not relieved.

"But that was not what I wanted to write you about," he cried, almost violently. "Not that I took pride in my promotion, but because—because I have loved you all my life—that was what I wanted to write. But our mails were so uncertain, and then I wanted the pleasure of telling you."

She stopped, and continued to look on the ground. At last she raised her eyes to his with childlike frankness and said: "I don't know what to answer you, Manning. Matters have changed so much—the future looks as strange to me as the present seems. For now, please withdraw

your last remark, and let us go on as if you had not made it."

"I can not, I can not! I wanted to tell you before I went away with the army, but then I had nothing to offer you but myself, and I felt unworthy. When I was a boy and first discovered my love for you, I often wished for a war in which I could distinguish myself, that I might deserve you. Now I have had the chance, and have little more to offer. But I will confess I did what I did more for love of you than for love of Country. I love the South and our rights, but in the field, on the march, or in battle, I thought of you a hundred times before I thought of them once."

"No, no, Manning, I can not believe it. I have thought of you these four years as one who fought for the righteousness of our cause—don't disappoint me now."

"It may be that you were the embodiment of our cause, but it was you. Could I love you and think of your having to live under other conditions than those to which we have grown up? It may be weakness, it may be selfishness, but it was you. Your charming and lovable self was my star; and now, after four awful years, I return to find you more lovely, more beautiful than ever. Our political hopes are swept away, but my love inspires new hopes."

"Whatever my position, you will not press the question to-day. In the name of the friendship of our childhood, give me a little time," she pleaded.

"How much time? How shall I know when to speak again? I can not wait long, Mary Lou. I

have waited now until I have tried to do something to deserve you. I am still unworthy, but I have tried."

"I do not question your worth, Manning, and I can not now tell you my reasons, but you must wait for a time," she said.

"May I not hope for an early permission to ask Colonel Grayson for your hand?" he asked.

"I can not tell you that, even. But give me your hand, and tell me that this conversation shall not be mentioned, and that we are still the friends we always have been."

He took her hand regretfully.

"That ought to satisfy any man, for no other living man enjoys the friendship of such a woman. Well, give me the bucket and I'll begin to be your slave."

"No, you may bring the water as my old-time friend, or help me to get dinner—not as my slave."

"As you like," and he went toward the spring-house with the hardest problem of his life just propounded, and he forbidden to attempt its solution.

What did it all mean? Was everything swept away by the terrible deluge that had overwhelmed their Section? Was nothing left but waste? Had people's hearts been conquered, like their armies? Some, he knew, had gone over to the enemy, easy prey to the victor. But Mary Lou was not of that class. Human hearts like hers, attuned to the integrity and sincerity of their customs; human hearts rooted in the ancient soil of their splendid civilization, could not be changed by the misfor-

tunes of a day or a year. The cause of his disappointment was locked within her breast—some matter of conscience or duty, but right, he was certain. He would watch and soon it would show itself. Then he would come in and stop the silent tragedy.

When left alone, Mary Lou neglected her work for a few moments' reflection. She had thought only a short time before that she loved Manning Lewis. She recalled how hearty and generous he was as a boy, and how he had grown to sincere and honest manhood, possessed of all those straightforward traits of character that women worth winning most admire. And now, without the sacrifice of a single personal virtue, he had made for himself a good record. He had shown himself composed of that mettle from which heroes are made.

But he denied the influence of patriotism. He had confessed a selfish motive. Perhaps he had not analyzed his feelings to their full depths—he was mistaken in himself. Perhaps he was right, and she had never fully understood his character.

The first shock of this blunt declaration having passed, she asked herself: "Why, after all, should not I be flattered by such a confession?" To be the lodestar to a man through such dangers and privations exceeded her earthly ambition; to be invested by him with all his high ideals was more than admiration, it was little short of worship. She had known that he loved her, yet she never had thought of him as suffering the miseries of

war on her account. But did he love the South? That was the question.

This dream was of short duration, and she turned the drift of her thoughts. If she went away, who would care for her foster-father, and repay all his incomparable kindnesses? She could not remember the time when she was left by the untimely death of her parents, a helpless and homeless infant, and he had taken her to his home and heart. She could remember only his continuous and unchanging tenderness and devotion. Kind, patient, considerate, loving; could a natural father be more? All this, without nature's mysterious bond of paternity! As much and often as she had thought of it, her obligation never before had seemed so great.

And Howard, who had been the ideal brother! With his strong impulsive nature, which in youth was not always under perfect control, she could not remember that she had ever been made to feel that she was a foster-sister. He had prospects before the war that would have kept the home together without her presence, but the events of the past four years had left a cruel wound in his heart. He now deserved not only a home, but the consolation of sisterly attentions. Was all this of Providential directing that she might make a silent sacrifice of her own hopes for their comfort and happiness? She could not make repayment; the debt was too great, but she could have the satisfaction of trying. Time and good fortune might change Howard's plans and then she would be free again; but this must come about naturally, and without selfish planning and scheming.

So nothing remained for Manning Lewis but to wait and grope in the mystery—she could not explain, and he must not carry his afflictions to Howard. In the meantime she could solve the question of Manning's patriotism. She could determine whether he fought for a record, or because he loved Southern rights.

VIII

ORDERS IS ORDERS

WHILE this old conflict, as old as the human race, between Ideal and Duty was being fought to another draw, the other members of the family sat under the spreading oaks of the household discussing the two problems of the times, the situation and the outlook. They were heedless of intruders, until they heard the tramp of horses, and on looking up saw five men riding toward them. Each wore a blue uniform, evidently a castaway, and the one in advance displayed officer's straps; on one fat, dumpy shoulder that of a captain, on the other that of a lieutenant.

Major Lewis spoke up quickly: "As I 'm a sinner, there comes Jonas Smith with a posse at his heels; trouble is brewing from some quarter. They are turning in here. Have you anything left that they can carry off, Rodeny?"

"Nothing that would be worth the time and exertion of that crowd, I believe," answered Colonel Grayson.

"But what is Jonas Smith doing with a Federal uniform on?" asked Howard. "The last time I saw him, the day I enlisted, he was on crutches at Kosciusko shouting louder for secession than any three men who joined the army of the States."

"Yes, that attack of rheumatism lasted until the conscript officers threatened to have him exam-

ined by surgeons, when suddenly Mr. Jonas disappeared. He remained in hiding until the fortunes of war were against us, and then suddenly reappeared, well of body and changed of heart. He espoused the Federal cause with more vehemence than you saw him manifest for the Confederacy at Kosciusko, and now he is high sheriff of Williams County. Such is the genus patriot," said Major Lewis.

" You can't mean to tell me that this scoundrel, who has been a negro-trader all his life, has turned his coat and now holds office in Williams County," exclaimed Howard, with great surprise.

" Yes, my son," said Colonel Grayson, " to just such depths have we fallen in these new times. That person, who never did, knowingly, a decent thing in all his life, and whose father ran an auction-block, is now sheriff of our county, Captain of the County Guards, a man of authority and influence with the powers in control of the State Government; and, worst of all, in this new association, is a representative citizen. He may honor us with a discourse on treason, if he stops long enough."

" Conduct the conversation, Rodeny, for I can't trust myself to speak with the contemptible cuss. You hate the damned nigger-trader as much as I do, but you have better control of yourself," said Major Lewis in an undertone, for the horsemen were then upon them.

As they drew near, Smith was noticed to be giving orders, in response to which two of his followers deployed from each side and rode around until they encircled the party on the ground.

When they had brought their horses to a stand, Colonel Grayson looked up for the first time and spoke: "Good-morning, Smith. this is a fine summer's day."

"Mornin', gentlemen, mornin'. A very fine day, Cunnel, jest as yo' say, a very fine day." Smith always repeated when he spoke to social superiors; he thought it added emphasis. "We air out executin' o'ders, Cunnel, executin' o'ders, suh. We could n't make our Confederate Gover'ment hol,' Cunnel — we got licked — an' now we must tu'n in, suh, an' support the ole Gover'ment." Colonel Grayson nodded assent to the patriotic Jonas, who was about to continue his harangue, when Major Lewis, forgetting his resolution, asked: "What orders bring you this way, Smith?"

"Important o'ders, gentlemen, important o'ders. I'm mighty sorry to say, but we shall hev to arrest Cap'n (I think that's his rank), Cap'n Grayson. Sorry to say so, but o'ders is o'ders."

Major Lewis showed no surprise.

"On what charge, Smith? My son has taken the oath and expects to keep his parole. I have never known him to be guilty of a felony or misdemeanor, unless it be one to have a conscience and the personal courage to follow its dictates," said Colonel Grayson, with perfect composure.

"No conscience an' no courage hev to do with the case, Cunnel. On them questions yo' hev always been soun', and the Cap'n too, accordin' to common remark in this neighborhood; but hit is against the law of Tennessee to wear that Rebel unifo'm, sence we smashed the Rebel Gover'-

ment." Smith evidently had forgotten that he spoke a moment before as a member of the crushed cause. "We air o'dered to arrest every man wearin' thet unifo'm, an' o'ders is o'ders, Cunnel."

"But my son has no other clothes to wear," said Colonel Grayson. "Federal soldiers robbed my house of every article of clothing that my daughter had not already given to the negroes. Howard came home only last night, and you surely will give him an opportunity to clothe himself according to the law; we do not aim to begin our new citizenship as willful law-breakers."

"I hev no o'ders coverin' sech a case, Cunnel. Arrest him, gentlemen!" The officers, who, perhaps never before had been addressed as "gentlemen," outside a bar-room, made no immediate response to the order, and Howard sprang lightly to a tree and placed himself in attitude of defense. But his father with a mild movement of his hand, restrained him and said: "No, Howard, do not think of resisting the officers of the law." Then turning to the sheriff he asked: "You have a warrant from some duly authorized court, I reckon? Would you mind allowing us to see it?"

"I hev n't no reg'lar warrant, Cunnel; no warrant, only o'ders, suh," answered the sheriff.

"You can not arrest a citizen in time of peace without a warrant, can you?" asked Colonel Grayson, calmly.

"Oh, yas, I can, Cunnel, on o'ders. O'ders takes the place of warrants an' everything," declared the fledgling of authority, with great certainty.

"I won't submit to this, especially at the hands of such a scoundrel as Jonas Smith," cried Howard, in spite of the reproving look of his father.

"Yas, yo' will, Cap'n. For I'm not only Cap'n Jonas Smith, but sheriff of Williams County," said Smith with tantalizing superiority, and he drew a revolver from its holster at his belt.

"Shoot, if you like, you turn-coat; you shall not take me alive," cried Howard, in desperation.

But Colonel Grayson took a step toward his son, and said: "Go with them, Howard, and make no resistance, for they represent the present administration of law in Tennessee. Major Lewis and I will go to Kosciusko and sign your bail-bond. This is a cruel business, but we must obey the laws, when we know what they are. You can not ask even the satisfaction that this insult demands, for that implies that the offender is a gentleman. Go with them, Howard, there's nothing else to do."

The insinuation was lost on Smith, whose knowledge of the code went not beyond the plain challenge in writing, and with a show of consideration, he said: "We could shackle him, Cunnel, but bein' as he is a Cap'n, of the same rank of myself, I'll not show him thet disrespec'. Corp'ral Garrison, help the Cap'n on Lieutenant Brassley's mar' — she can carry double." Now Brassley had been, before the war, overseer on the only plantation in the neighborhood where slaves had been cruelly flogged, and he was more notorious for brutality and consequently more thoroughly despised by decent white people than the negro-trader, Jonas Smith.

"Must I submit to this new indignity, Father? Arrested by Jonas Smith, and carried off to jail by Zack Brassley! Shall I go, or die here and now?" cried Howard.

"I think it best that you go, my son."

"Yes, Howard, it's better that some men arrest you, than that they say good-morning to you in the public street," put in the Major.

Meantime, Manning Lewis had returned from the spring with the bucket of water, and as he came to the house he found Mary Lou on the front piazza looking anxiously at the crowd.

"What can that mean, Mr. Manning?" she asked. "Those soldiers came so suddenly, and there seems to be some excitement. Can it be that we are to have more trouble? Please go quickly and see what it means." And he started off at a run.

"Oh, ho, here comes another criminal," cried the sheriff, as he saw Manning in his ragged old uniform. "We shall hav to take him along, too, gentlemen. The Gov'nor say arrest every one with thet cussed unifo'm on, an' o'ders is o'ders, as I said befo', Cunnel."

"Yes, take him, too, Smith," said Major Lewis, "my son shall take the same fate as his captain." Then turning to his son he continued: "Manning, it seems that you and Howard are unconscious and necessary violators of laws enacted by the wisdom of Nashville and executed by the patriotism of Williams County. You are both under arrest. By our advice, Howard has submitted without resistance. I ask you to do the same, as you are equally guilty."

"Howard under arrest! Well, Mr. Nigger-trader, take me too; we'll investigate afterward."

The obliging corporal helped him to mount the horse with the second lieutenant, one Bonfir, who had served a term in the penitentiary for arson.

"Major Lewis and I will be in Kosciusko as soon as you are," Colonel Grayson called after the young men as they rode away with their escort.

"The worst of all this business, Major Lewis, is the blow to Mary Lou. She will feel the disgrace of this outrage most keenly."

"She is a better philosopher and has more sense than all of us together," said the Major, "and will take in the situation at once. But you can't go to Kosciusko and leave her here alone. It would n't be safe. The country is overrun with patriots of this new kind. I'll go and arrange the matter of bail, and bring the young men home; then we will have another reunion. These reunions are pleasant, but may lose their edge through too frequent use."

IX

INGRATITUDE, BLACK INGRATITUDE

BUT Sheriff Smith and posse were not to sail into harbor without encountering a storm, and that from an unexpected quarter. Pleas, who had spent his first day of manumission in hunting out and doing odd jobs of repairing (such as he never had been asked to do in slavery), was trying to bring the gate post back to plumb when the officers with their prisoners rode down through the house-lot to the pike. He could not comprehend the situation, and with the familiarity of a body servant asked : " Whar yo' go, Mars Howard ? "

" Oh, I have to go to Kosciusko with Sheriff Smith, on a little matter of business," he answered indifferently. But this did not satisfy Pleas; on the contrary, it somewhat aroused his suspicion, and he stepped quickly into the road in front of Brassley's horse. The whole cavalcade came to a halt. " What business we got 'long with Jonas Smith ? He doan got no mo' niggers to sell, 'sides we nerr done no business with him no how. Whar yo' go, Mars Manning ? "

" The Captain and I have to go to town on special business, Pleas. We will be gone but a short while; we will be back directly," answered Manning. But Pleas refused to be put off, and took Brassley's horse by the bit.

" Naw, suh, Zach Brassley, yo' caint ride no

further till ole Pleas un'erstan's 'bout dis business. What is hit, Mars Howard?"

Howard tried to speak, but could not utter a word. Something stuck in his throat. Smith, whose sentiment had not been touched, spoke up with some impatience :—

"Cap'n Grayson an' Lieutenant Lewis air un'er arrest, an' yo' air resistin' the sheriff of Williams County. Get outn our way, nigger." Pleas did not move, nor relinquish his hold on Brassley's horse; he stood as if dazed and muttered :—

"Mars Howard 'rested, Mars Manning 'rested; 'rested by Jonas Smith an' Zack Brassley. Quality 'rested by trash!" Pleas was the descendant of negroes that came out from Virginia with the pioneer Grayson, and was one of the few in Tennessee who continued to believe in and talk about quality. "Naw, suh, Jonas Smith, she'ff er no she'ff yo' caint 'rest my young marster an' tote him off to jail. Ole Pleas won' ____"

"Get outn the road, nigger, or I 'll declar' a riot an' call out the County Guards," cried the sheriff, maudlin with rage at the defiance shown his authority. "I hev sole better niggers 'n yo' fo' five hundred dollars," he continued, completely forgetting himself.

"Pleas will make no trouble when he understands this matter," said Howard. Then addressing his servant he continued, "Mr. Manning and I are arrested, Pleas, because we are wearing our old uniforms. We have to go to court and give bail or pay our fines. That is all. We'll be back directly."

"I go with yo', Mars Howard. Ole Pleas doan trus' yo' long with nigger-beatin' Zack Brassley. Dis de new gov'ment I heerd yo' an' Mars Rodeny a-speakin' 'bout las' night? Mighty trashy gov'ment! Nothin' good in hit fo' white folks, nor niggers, nerr."

And still he did not move, nor give up his hold on the horse. The officers were grumbling among themselves at the interruption and the indifference shown them by a negro slave; but Pleas heard not, or ignored them entirely.

At last Howard said: "You go up to the house, Pleas, and help father. He needs you now."

"If yo' go with dese men, lemme catch yo' hoss; yo' doan wan' to ride with dat Zack Brassley. We be 'ternally disgrace'. I bring yo' hoss right quick. Lemme help yo' to 'light, Mars Howard."

"No, thank you, Pleas, I will go as I am. You hurry up to the house and help father," said Howard. And Pleas let go his hold on the horse's bridle and the posse moved on, but not till Corporal Garrison, who was their toady and philanthropist, suggested to him that he could learn things to his advantage at the Union League.

As they rode away they heard Pleas muttering to himself: "Union League, Union League, I doan wan' no Union League. De niggers need a good beatin' an' be set to wuck. Union League with Jonas Smith an' Zack Brassley in hit!"

Smith having exploded his mine of fury now fell to philosophizing: "What ungrateful critters niggers is! I hev worked fo' niggers all my life-long; hev took 'em from pore, bankrup' masters,

an' sole 'em to rich uns; hev carried 'em 'way from wives thet they was tired of, a hundred mile, an' sole 'em whar they could git new uns, an' now arfter we hev fought fo' years to give 'em lib'ty, they 'buse us. Thet's what I call ingratitude."

"That might be called black ingratitude," suggested Manning Lewis. But the sarcasm never penetrated the mail of malice and egotism which enrobed the new government.

X

WHEREIN INSTRUCTIONS SEASON JUSTICE

THE triumphal entry into Kosciusko of Captain Jonas Smith and posse with their prisoners was accomplished with more than a smack of classic pomp and glory. Its barbaric splendor would have been complete, only the victims had not that miserable and terrified look ascribed to them in the history of like brutal events in pagan Rome. But the indifference of the young men abated not one jot the blazing exultation of the officers.

The conquering hero led the solemn procession over the rickety bridge, battered and blood-stained in honest battle, up a street, down a lane, and with a grand flourish into *via sacra*, toward the court-house. His husky valor flashed from every feature; dominion sat majestically on his two dumpy shoulders.

The populace, mostly negroes who had deserted their masters after the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation, gaped lazily from cabins or in knots along the wayside, with inadequate appreciation of the grandeur of the occasion. One of the group standing at the entrance to an alley, along which was ranged a line of negro cabins, broke out with:—

“ De marster run, ha, ha,
De darky stay, ho, ho.”

But he was frowned into silence by the uncertain, enquiring look on the faces of his companions.

The black man had not yet been taught that the white gentleman of the South was his mortal enemy. He knew that these two young men belonged to the class that had given him food, clothing, and medicine—all he ever had wanted or hoped for; that their persecutors were of the class that had beaten and sold him. He was then at rest, his passions were asleep, and his splendid philosophy had complete possession of his limited powers of thought. This and other like exhibitions of the new authority, intended to bolster his confidence and support, brought little peace to his unimpassioned meditations. The rule of his old master, even the rod of the cruel one, was a condition with which he was familiar and could cope; but this swelling sovereignty in the hands of vicious and designing men, forbode a thousand possible harms. And the negro, like all other people superstitious by nature and bringing up, will endure a present evil rather than exchange it for an indefinite promise of future good. To the superstitious mind there are no terrors like those of uncertainty.

After the triumph of the victors had been sufficiently paraded, the vanquished were carried to the capitol for sacrifice. This was set to take place in the office of N. Lex Witan, magistrate, acting judge of criminal cases, who awaited with impatience his turn in the humiliating proceedings. In common with nearly all civil officers of the time, he usurped authority and assumed dignity double what the wretched laws bestowed. Not content with such an office as a justice of the peace usually occupied, he had taken possession

of the court room, and there enthroned himself in the seat of the Judge of the Circuit Court. Here justice of his own peculiar kind could be dispensed before large and appreciative audiences, to the terror of violators and the renown of the court. For, thought he: "What fame is there in star-chamber justice?"

The spacious room was filled with a freckled crowd of negroes and shiftless whites, when Howard Grayson and Manning Lewis were brought in.

All this marching and counter-marching had consumed so much time that Major Lewis was only a few moments behind the procession when it reached the court-house. As he rode up, a negro stepped quickly out from a group at the door and took his horse's bit with one hand and a stirrup with the other, saying: "Evenin', Mars Walker, evenin', suh; lemme help yo' 'light."

"Why, good-evening, Mose! What are you doing here?"

"I's hyear to tell yo' thet I's gittin' monst'ous tired of dis lib'ty they-all's talkin' 'bout, an' I's comin' back to wuck," said Mose.

"I don't want you, Mose. You were the most trifling buzzard I ever had about me; never did earn a peck of meal a week. I was mighty glad to get shut of you."

"I knows I was lazy, Mars Walker, but 't was 'case yo' sech a kin' marster. I wucks good, I will, if yo' only lemme come. Caint I come, Mars Walker?" pleaded the negro, with pretended pathos.

"I would n't have such a no-account cuss about

me again," said the Major bluffly, but apparently relenting. "Hold my horse a few minutes, while I attend to some business with Squire What's-his-name."

As Major Lewis entered the court-room, the magistrate asked the "prisoners at the bar" the question usually reserved for the trial: "Guilty or not guilty?"

"Not guilty," both answered, confidently.

"Not guilty?" the judge asked, peevishly. "Hit ruther looks like a clare case, young gentlemen. The Cote advises yo' to plead guilty an' pay yore fines, or go to jail like gentlemen. Hit looks, in reason, thet yo' air guilty."

"But, your honor, perhaps not guilty in the manner and form charged," said Major Lewis.

"The Cote is not bounden to hear outside argument at this time, Major Lewis; besides hit is not a question of manner an' fo'm. I ask them prisoners at the bar of this Cote, 'Guilty or not guilty,' meanin', in reason, air they guilty of wearin' the Rebel unifo'm in time of peace, an' they both answers the Cote, 'Not guilty.' Is this Cote bline? Doan this Cote recognize Rebel clothes when hit sees 'em? In reason, hit do. Then the prisoners air guilty, an' the Cote caint listen to no sech a plea. Hain't thet law? In reason, hit is," answered the great man, with becoming official dignity.

"If the court will allow me to suggest," continued Major Lewis, with unwonted patience, "this is not a felony charge, only a misdemeanor. Should the young men be convicted, upon trial by a jury of their peers, the court could impose a

fine, nothing more. Am I not right, your honor? That being the case, they are entitled to be released from the custody of these officers upon making bail-bond to appear for trial at such future day as the court shall appoint. Am I not right again, your honor?" The austerity of the judge began to break away before the arguments and courtesy of the Major, and he moved uneasily on the bench, and struggled hard to make his dull features look wise. Finally, he took from a shelf a huge volume labelled, "Laws of Tennessee," which he threw open before him with careless familiarity. This act spread a shower of dust, the accumulation of weeks, for the court seldom had need to refresh his knowledge by reference to books. He ran hastily up and down several pages of index, muttering solemnly to himself; then opening it at random he wrinkled his brow, squinted his eyes and pursed his mouth over the first page exposed. Throwing back his head, he gazed into the dangling array of antique cobwebs that decorated the ceiling, and studied attentively their endless convolutions. The struggle was long and herculean, and he seemed several times on the point of agreeing with the Major, perhaps as the easiest escape from mental toil; when, with a start, he plunged an unwashed hand into a mysterious rent in his coat-lining and drew forth a small packet. He unwound the paper wrappings and disclosed a letter bearing the stamp of the Chief Executive of the State. It contained his instructions for this class of cases, direct from the Governor. After reading, or pretending to read it, he called Sheriff Smith to his side and held

a whispered consultation, nodding frequently in token of approval. The crowd watched with close attention all these manifestations of wisdom; and, when the great man had dismissed the sheriff with a wave of the hand and had looked straight before him into space a few moments, his countenance turgid with conviction and perspiration, there was a perceptible murmur of relief and satisfaction.

"Wall, thet is a mighty big question an' the Cote finds the law about as yo' hev stated, Major Lewis; yas, yas, hit is a well-known principle of law; the Cote was about to define hit, only in mo' judicious language, of co'se. The gentlemen air entitled to bail-bond. Who 'll make hit? "

"I will become their surety, if your honor will name the amount," said Major Lewis.

"The Cote jedges thet between man an' man, about three thousan' dollars in each case the right amount."

"Is n't that pretty steep, your honor?" asked Major Lewis. "What is the limit of the fine which the court is entitled to assess in case of conviction? Ought that not to govern the matter of bail somewhat?"

"No, no, in reason, no. Thet's not the law, not the law. The Cote hev 'lowed yo' too much lib'nty of speech, Major Lewis. Bail is fixed at three thousan' dollars in each case."

"Prepare the bond, if it please the court. I will sign and qualify," said the Major, abandoning all hope of a reasonable hearing.

The magistrate, who had much ado to sign his name or to read others' handwriting, instructed his clerk to prepare the bond.

While this controversy was going on, the expression on the faces of the crowd changed with the varying fortunes of the young men. The whites, who belonged to that worthless class that had always held the respectable element in envy, smiled when the court was austere, and frowned when it showed signs of relenting. On the other hand, the negroes, although they understood little of the proceedings, showed plainly their sympathy for the captives, and grinned with satisfaction when Major Lewis confounded the court with simple questions. Had these ignorant negroes understood the unnecessary and vicious humiliation being heaped upon the young gentlemen, they might have mutinied, and this history might not have been further enacted. So it was all over the South. The security of the new government in the practice of all its outrages, lay in the ignorance of the black man.

After the clerk had scratched and scrawled for an immoderate length of time he placed the written documents on the desk before the judge, who gave them a satisfied glance and a series of approving nods.

"The documents is ready, Major Lewis; accordin' to law yo' hev to qualify on yore oath."

"I am ready, please the court; administer the oath."

Then with a look of dull malice on his face the justice held out the moth-eaten old Bible and said: "Do yo' solemnly swear that yo' air the owner of property, subjec' to execution an' free from incumbrance, wu'th six thousan' dollars, within the County of Williams an' State of Tennessee?"

"I do," answered the Major, bending forward to kiss the big Book.

"Hol' on thar, Major, hol' on; the Cote is not through yit," and reading with great labor, word by word, from the Governor's letter, he continued: "Do yo' farther solemnly swear that yo' air an' hev been a active frien' of the Gover'ment of the United States, a enemy of the so-called Confederate States of America, that yo' ar-dent-ly desired the sup-pres-sion of the rebellion against the United States, an' that yo' re-joi-ced in the ov-er-throw of said pre-ten-ded Confederacy, so help yo' Gawd?"

For once in his life Major Lewis displayed the weakness of surprise, which quickly changed to a look of inexpressible disgust.

"You have known me more than twenty years, Lex Witan, and in all that time have you heard anything of me that would lead you to suppose that I would make that oath?"

"No insult intended, Major, no insult intended. The Cote was followin' instructions. Thar they be," and the magistrate handed out the Governor's letter to support his position.

"I don't care for your instructions. You know my record during the late war as well as I know yours. Had it not been for infirmities received in maintaining the honor of this country in the Mexican invasion, you know I would have been in the army of the States; but being incapable of military duty I served my people in another way. I did not shout for secession and then skulk until such time as I could turn my coat to serve my personal advantage. I can not take your oath."

"As I said afo', the Cote meant no pussonal insult; hit only followed instructions. In this Cote, Major, all is sarved alike — the rich an' the pore, the black an' the white, the high an' the low— accordin' to law an' instructions. Accordin' to law yo' hev property, but accordin' to instructions yo' air not able to take the oath; so, in reason, the Cote caint take yo' as bondsman. Hev the prisoners at the —"

"These young gentlemen are not prisoners at the bar of this so-called court," broke in the Major, vehemently. "They are not arrested on any warrant; they are not criminals. They surrendered and came here voluntarily, because they did not want to resist the officers of the law. Now they will give bail, and if I am disqualified by reason of my services to what I thought were the rights and interests of my people, I think I can get one who will be acceptable to the court, under its instructions. You will give me a little time?"

"The Cote hev other cases to hear this evenin', Major, an' would like to git shet of this, 'gainst takin' 'em up," answered the man of instructions. In all his career as backwoods justice and all-round man without affairs, Lex Witan was never before known to be in a hurry.

"I will return directly and advise you whether or not we can make the bond," said the Major. Then turning to Howard he continued: "While I'm away, Captain, you and Manning remain at the 'ba' of this Cote' as patiently as possible."

Major Lewis hastened from the court room, mounted at the door, asked Mose to wait there for his return, and putting spur to the old horse,

rode with all possible speed to the house of his old friend, Anton Nelson. He found Mr. Nelson at work in the garden, and without stopping to dismount, called to him: "How-dy, Anton, come out here, please. I want to make use of your friendship and politics."

"Good-evening, Walker. Can't you get down and come in? I have not seen you since you got back from the last session of your Congress. What can I do for you?"

Major Lewis dismounted and they started to walk toward the court-house.

"Oh, it's that damned scoundrel Jonas Smith and his vagabond crowd! They-all came by Elmington where we were sitting out under the trees in a very happy reunion, and arrested Howard Grayson and my son and carried them over here, and are about to land them in jail. What for? Simply because the boys have no clothes to wear except their old uniforms. I came in to sign their bail-bond, and what do you reckon that damned old fool, Witan, did? Excuse my language, Anton; I'm only trying to give you an idea of the folly of the case. Of course you can't guess! He refused to let me sign those bonds because I can't take a sort of test oath; that is, an oath that I rejoiced at the downfall of the Confederacy, and a lot more of such stuff."

"He knew that you were too honorable to make such an oath, and why did he not tell you in the first place that his instructions required it of bondsmen? No, no, those boys can't go to jail for any such trivial offense."

"Exactly so, but they are threatened with just

that humiliation," said the Major, "if I have not friends enough in the Union party to sign for them."

" You have as many friends to-day, Walker Lewis, as ever. These ignorant, dictatorial fellows who have come to power and influence so suddenly never were your friends; they always hated a gentleman. You and I never did agree on the proposition, Union or Secession, but I never questioned your sincerity of belief or integrity of purpose, and this opportunity to prove it gives me particular pleasure. At what amount did they fix the bond for this silly offense?"

" At the ridiculous figure of three thousand dollars," answered the Major, with appropriate disgust.

" Three thousand dollars! How foolish, yes more, how foolishly malicious. You know, Walker, that the better element of the Union men in the South does not approve of such methods, but we are powerless. These creatures outnumber and over-ride us. Then, too, they are more useful to some of the high State officials, who, I fear, are both malicious and designing. They-all have little more regard for me than they have for you. It seems to suit them best to be making a fight on personal decency. Among themselves, 'down with the aristocracy' is quite a watchword. They will soon overthrow themselves — such methods can not long prevail — and then I hope we shall get affairs into better hands."

Anton Nelson, a Whig before the formation of the Republican party, had been always an intense Union man; yet so sincere were his convictions

and so upright had been his life, that his most bitter political antagonist respected him. Only once during the heat of debate and agitation that preceded hostilities had he been insulted because of his stand; and that was by a worthless crowd of the Jonas Smith stripe. This was promptly avenged by his personal friends and neighbors of the secession party. When armies were mustered, he left his family in his own house at Kosciusko, went to East Tennessee, joined the Federal forces as a common soldier and served well until permanently disabled by a wound.

Like every man who has brains enough to harbor convictions and the personal courage to stand for them, he was the friend of every honest soldier. Partisanship has no place in the wonderful free-masonry of the brave.

Contrary to the expectations of Mr. Nelson, his suggestions were received by the mighty judge with cringing servility. Bail was reduced from three thousand to one hundred dollars in each case, without other parley than: "Jest as yo' thinks best, Mr. Nelson, as yo' thinks best. The Cote aims to make hit big enough so they won't jump the bond. But yo', bein' of our party, air entitled to a leetle better terms."

"I am a member of the Union party, Squire Witan, but not of the party that makes such foolish arrests as this one, and names such outrageous bond as three thousand dollars when a hundred is almost exorbitant," replied Mr. Nelson. "Such acts as these will bring the Union party into contempt with the very people who otherwise would come to our support."

"Jest sign the bond right here, Captain Nelson, right here. On the line, near the bottom, Captain Nelson. Oh, yo' doan hev to swear 'bout hit, Captain Nelson," jabbered the magistrate, who feared a further lecture on the subject in hand. He felt his dignity would be forever undone, if this harangue should continue in the presence of all the multitude. But for all this official anxiety, Mr. Nelson did not sign the bond until he had read it carefully and suggested several changes, mainly to correct the absurd spelling of commonplace words.

"Now, administer the oath," said he.

"Yo' doan hev to swear, Cunnel Nelson," said the justice, in such confusion that he advanced Mr. Nelson clean over the ranks of major and lieutenant-colonel in less than three minutes.

"In the first place, Lex Witan, I am not Captain Nelson; in the second place, I am not Colonel Nelson; but plain Anton Nelson, or Mr. Nelson, or Private Nelson, as is most convenient for you. And in the third place, I want to be treated like my old-time friend, Major Lewis, was treated; administer all the oaths you deem necessary to perfect security in this case."

"Certainly, Major — Cunnel — Mr. Nelson. Do yo' solemnly swear that yo' will support the constitution of the United States, the constitution of the State of Tennessee, an' the constitution of the Union League of America, an' nerr reveal hits secrets, so help yo' Gawd ?"

"So far as all those constitutions and secrets have to do with bail-bonds, I swear," answered Mr. Nelson, with infinite disgust. A snicker or

two from the audience apprised the justice of his blunder, and his confusion doubled, for he held out the Governor's letter of instructions instead of the Bible, and said, with perfect gravity: "Kiss the Book."

Mr. Nelson did not kiss the letter, but in clear desperation grasped the pen and signed the bonds without further to-do, and then led the way out of the court room.

Major Lewis, whose sense of sacrilege was not touched by the blundering substitution, roared with laughter and apologized in the same breath to Mr. Nelson for adding to his embarrassment.

"What are we to do, Walker, with such officers in power?" asked Mr. Nelson.

"It seems to be easy for you, but what would we poor Rebels do if we had no friend like Anton Nelson to stand godfather to us in trouble? I can't express my gratitude for this friendly act."

Howard and Manning both started in to deliver little speeches but their benefactor cut them off abruptly:—

"Hold up, please! Excuse me for interrupting two gentlemen at once, but I am no hero. I'm already thanked beyond the worth of my services. You-all are bound to leave me in debt by your courtesy. If you young gentlemen had to be arrested, it was a very happy fate that plucked me out of my garden with the cry, 'You have friends in trouble.' So you see, I am the only person who has got any real, substantial glory out of this infamous business. I need no thanks. Besides, this little matter is less than nothing compared to what I have felt at liberty

to ask from Colonel Grayson or Major Lewis any day for thirty years."

"But that should not abate our gratitude, and if you won't let me try to express my feelings, I shall hurry home and tell father all you have done for us, and I shall not fail to mention your perverse modesty — if you will excuse the adjective," said Howard.

"Come back to the house and get a snack to eat, and after a smoke take my old horse to help you home. Perhaps Mrs. Nelson will hunt out some clothing for you to wear until you can better provide yourselves."

"Thank you, Mr. Nelson, but if you can lend us two good muskets and a dozen rounds of ammunition, you will do us greater service," said Manning Lewis.

"No, Manning, Mr. Nelson's offer is more sensible for now," said Major Lewis, thoughtfully. "We are too weak in numbers to be drawn into a conflict with these usurpers of bad authority. If their violence is continued, we must find means to meet it with, but we can not do it single-handed. I did not agree, on first thought, with Colonel Grayson, when he advised surrender to Jonas Smith, but now I see the wisdom of his course. What say you, Captain?"

"I will not contradict you and Mr. Nelson and father as to the best course, but I wish Manning and I each had a musket," said Howard. "It might come in handy one of these evil days."

"I don't reckon you will be interfered with any more," said Mr. Nelson, "especially for such trumped-up charges."

The snack had been eaten, and the young men, mounted double on the borrowed horse, had taken leave and were riding away, when Mr. Nelson called after them:—

“When eulogizing me to Colonel Grayson, just add, that as I have found my influence so strong with the administration, your cases may never come up for trial. Can’t tell, of course, but that is possible.”

XI

ONE OF A TYPE ALMOST EXTINCT

AFTER Pleas had done a few trifling jobs he became absorbed in solicitude for his young master. He upbraided himself for having receded from his original purpose to go along with the officers. He could not work; in all that sea of havoc he could find nothing that needed to be done. Time moved so slowly, and anxiety swelled so rapidly within him that he found on calculation he could not contain his forebodings single-handed until Howard's return, so he posted off through the fields to tell his troubles to Uncle Phil and Aunt Manda.

He never had liked very well these two old persons. Uncle Phil was forever preaching, which bored him insufferably, for he wanted no other religion than that of his young master, which was more liberal in sort than the "hardshell" precepts of the old man. And Aunt Manda, who had been Howard's nurse, still chose to exercise more proprietorship, and practice more dictation over him than Pleas thought was profitable, especially from a woman. He did not love to think that any one, save perhaps Colonel Grayson, had the right to correct or control his young master; and the privilege of mild admonition, by means of timely suggestions, he reserved to himself alone. But now he was in trouble, and like many a man of less courage and more learning, he sped straight for the nearest preacher.

Aunt Manda saw him approaching and cried:—

“ Whar yo’ young marster at, whar meh baby? Doan yo’ brung ‘im home? Whar is he? ”

“ He come home with me las’ night; he all well. Ole Pleas brung him home all right.”

“ Bless de Lawd! Bless meh baby! ” And she called to Uncle Phil: “ Come hyear, ole man, Mars Howard home.”

“ Doan I tell yo’ I hed a veesion las’ night? De Lawd show me Mars Howard jes’ as plain. Doan I tell yo’ dis mawnin’, Manda? ” said Uncle Phil, as he hobbled out of the cabin.

“ Yas, yo’ ‘lowed yo’ seen ‘im, an’ yo’ reckon’ he daid, case he come to yo’ in de veesion, yo’ ole preachin’ fool,” answered Aunt Manda, who had little reverence for the cloth outside the pulpit.

“ Oh, I said dat jes’ to pesterize yo’, Manda, ” said Uncle Phil, with masculine superiority. “ I nerr reckon’ Mars Howard shu’ ‘nough daid.”

But Aunt Manda grew suddenly serious, and turning quickly to Pleas, said: “ Look-a-hyear, nigger, suthin’ wrong. Why doan Mars Howard come an’ see ole Mammy? ”

Pleas was clearly taken by surprise on this question, but quickly rallied and explained, with all necessary invention, how his young master intended to come back to see them the first thing in the morning, but that matters of business had very suddenly called him and Mr. Manning to Kosciusko.

“ Business teck err one our folks to Kosciusko ‘fo’ he show ‘spect to ole Mammy! Naw, suh, Pleas, yo’ caint lie to dis ole nigger. Come ‘long

ole man, git yo' ready. We goan down to de gret house an' see 'bout dis business. Dare 's suthin' wrong 'bout hit." And the old people disappeared in the cabin.

The house occupied by Uncle Phil and Aunt Manda was above the average negro cabin. It stood back full three hundred yards from the quarters, upon the rise of a round-faced knoll, about one cheek of which flowed the waters of Opal creek. The location was selected by the old man a half century before this history begins, while he was yet in the vigor of his priesthood, because of the deep pool in the creek which served for baptizings and foot-washings, ceremonies in which he had unbounded faith. And as neither his religious zeal nor his love of ceremonies abated with advancing age, this choice seemed little short of prescience; for the frequency with which he "went down into the water," regardless of weather or of his own infirmities, would have taxed a younger and warmer-blooded constitution, had not a roaring fire or a change of clothing awaited near at hand.

Here the pioneer Grayson had enclosed about two acres of land and built a cabin full twice as large as any of those occupied by ordinary slaves, and had installed Uncle Phil as lord of the manor. And each succeeding Grayson had recognized and remembered the rights of the old man in such substantial form, that if the plantation had passed out of the family Uncle Phil could have remained a free man and a land owner. So his seigniority was fixed and unquestioned until he took his third wife, Aunt Manda, when suddenly he found him-

self shorn of six-sevenths of his dominion. But as he was old and feeble, and preferred emancipation from material affairs, he was quite content with the seventh-day reign. He gave all his time to matters spiritual, and in the proportion that his glory smouldered through the week, it blazed in seven-fold splendor on Sunday, when the old pulpit was dragged from behind curtains that shut it in like the Ark of the Covenant in the temple of old, and benches were placed in the cabin, and Uncle Phil defied age and infirmity and the Devil in his regular two hours of preaching. Here all the negroes of the neighborhood had been used to collect of a Sunday afternoon; and so famous was the piety of the old man, that he usually counted a few white faces in his congregation.

The back yard had been planted to orchard when the cabin was built, and now yielded fruit beyond the needs of the occupants. The front was used for a garden. This had been maintained by hands from the quarters, since Uncle Phil had become too old to tend it. And now that the negroes had left the plantation, this, in common with the rest of the place, was taken with weeds. The elevation commanded a raking view of the whole place, and as Pleas waited for the old people to arrange toilets he cast his eye over the panorama of destruction, and for a moment forgot his troubles and fell into a reverie: "Dis sutnly is shamefu'; de fine s' plantation in de wurl', I reckon, gone t' smash! De niggers all runned 'way, when we mos' needs 'em. Dey needs a-beatin', dat's what dey needs. Dey doan need no lib'ty. But Mars Rodeny nerr did beat 'em,

an' dey won' do no good 'thout beatin'. Dey as well go fo' lib'ty."

He was interrupted here by the appearance of the old people, decked out in Sunday raiment, Aunt Manda's ponderous form encased in her red and yellow calico, and Uncle Phil in clerical black, with his funeral silk hat on — by odds the best clothing on the plantation.

To this point the result of Pleas's visit had been unsatisfactory, and the probabilities all read: "Cloudy and threatening, with thunder and lightning possible at any moment." He had started out with the full purpose of telling them of the outrage perpetrated by Jonas Smith and posse, but the sight of Aunt Manda with all her bluster forbade the subject. There are characters so belligerent as to make terrible the very mention of trouble. He then had made mental shift to kill time in recounting the real and imaginary exploits of his young master as a soldier. But the anxious turn in Aunt Manda had stopped this prospective vent. So now he was left without alternative. He had to walk back sullenly over the ground by which he had come, and listen to the brow-beating of an old fat negro woman, as she heaped suspicion and abuse upon him, and discredited the only tale he had been allowed to make. In vain he tried to turn the conversation to the field of glory. Aunt Manda could not make room in her mind for more than the one absorbing idea: "Suthin' wrong 'bout meh baby." Uncle Phil trudged meekly behind, mindful that his call to speak was from Above, and that without the sustaining property of pulpit

and Book, his feeble voice carried no conviction to his present audience.

When Major Lewis and the two young men rode up to Elmington to begin again the reunion, they found their party increased in numbers. Aunt Manda waited for no ceremony. Her place was first by all custom and usage, and still puffing and perspiring from her walk she rushed out to meet them, crying hysterically:—

“ De Lawd bless meh baby ! Come to yo’ Mammy ! Come kiss yo’ Mammy ! ”

And Captain Howard Grayson, the hero of many a charge, the gentleman of aristocratic birth and rearing, the young man of petty pride, uncovered his head before this black old slave, and kissed with honest affection her streaming cheeks. She wept on his shoulder, she patted his cheek, she called him by all those endearing names that only a negro mammy of the old type knew. Her joy was complete.

Uncle Phil, grave and serious, stood back, hat in hand, awaiting his turn in the proceedings. He was too wise to interrupt. When at last there was a lull, he moved confidently forward, extended his feeble old hand and said: “ Gawd bless yo’, Mars Howard ! Yo’ ole mammy done been monst’ous mis’able ’bout yo’; an’ Uncle Phil he pray err mawnin’ an’ night an’ all day, an’ all night when de mis’ry in hes laig kep’ him ‘wake, dat de good Lawd ’tect yo’ an’ brung yo’ safe home. Doan I, Manda ? ”

Aunt Manda could but nod consent when she saw before her, safe and sound, the object of such honest supplication.

"And the prayers of the righteous availeth much," said Major Lewis, with abnormal sincerity. But he spoiled it by adding: "At least, that's what I tell Mrs. Lewis by way of encouragement, when things come her way."

"I thank you, Uncle Phil, for all your kindly interest. Through those years of danger and suffering, I have thought so often of you and Aunt Manda. You-all were my constant companions, Pleas in person, and you and Aunt Manda in memory."

All felt that the ceremony of reunion was now complete, and the Lewises took leave and started for home. Colonel Grayson thought something ought to be done for Pleas, that he had been unduly overshadowed by the importance assumed by Aunt Manda, so he said to her: "You must remember, Aunt Manda, that Pleas deserves much credit for the safe return of Mr. Howard. He shared with his master every danger, nursed him in sickness and guarded him in a thousand ways, as only a faithful servant knows how to do."

"I was studyin' 'bout dat as we was comin' to de gret house," said Aunt Manda.

Before they went to the house, Felix Grayson drove up with a smart horse and shining carriage, the outfit of an agent of the Freedmen's Bureau. He scarcely waited for a formal "good-evening," he was so much excited.

"I have just learned of the arrest of Howard and young Lewis, and of the parade that was made of them. That was a shame, and I could have helped you if I had been in Kosciusko. It is the work of the State authorities and not of

the Federal Government. I intended to be in Kosciusko at noon, but was detained at Nashville. It is too bad, too bad."

"It was a very nasty business," said Colonel Grayson, "and I can not understand the animus of it. Perhaps it is the old grudge that low breeding bears to decency; perhaps Jonas Smith is but the agent and tool of others at present unknown to us. It showed us that we have friends in the Union party, at any rate, and I reckon that is some compensation. Won't you get out and take dinner with us?"

"No, thank you, Brother Rodeny; I have an engagement. I will try to arrange matters so you will not again be disturbed, for this, if continued, will flavor of persecution. I hope Mary Lou is well. Please give her my regards. If I can be of service to you, Brother Rodeny, don't hesitate to call on me. By-the-way, have you taken the oath of allegiance yet?"

"No, not yet," answered Colonel Grayson. "Major Lewis and I were talking about that this morning, and we agreed that we should wait a bit and see what kind of a government we were to have before attaching ourselves to it. If Lincoln had lived there would be no hesitation, but now we shall see what the politicians will do."

"Well, I must be going. Good-evening, Howard; good-evening, Brother Rodeny."

"He doan speak to no niggers. He doan mine thet Aunt Manda kerried him when he baby. Em-m, an' what a on'ry chile he war! He none our folks; an' he a-doin' of no good 'bout hyear, nuther," said Aunt Manda, as he drove away.

XII

CORN BREAD AND SWEAT OF THE BROW

PROMPT to his appointment, Manning Lewis arrived "at the crack of day" next morning with a bundle of mildewed straps and a shuck collar, his contribution to the work-harness. All the scraps were marshalled into a row of astonishing worthlessness; and after much labor by the rule of "cut and try" the gear was assembled, although with lawless disregard to the original purpose the parts were intended to serve.

The old bull-tongue plow was dragged from hiding, a sight in rusty and soggy decrepitude. Everything was complete after its kind, only there were no lines with which to rein the horse. Their best skill and contrivance could not devise even a jerk-line.

"All the better," cried Howard, determined to see only success, "we can divide the work easier. One can hold the plow while the other leads the horse, turn and turn about. Otherwise you will be forever fussing lest I do more than my share. I'm glad there are no lines."

"Besides, the old horse may need support. The poor beast has been ridden so hard and dieted so carefully, that I doubt if he has strength to haul a plow without staggering. I speak right now for the first turn at the handles," said Manning.

Pleas gave such assistance as he could, but he knew nothing about farm work; and if he had been put to it to hitch up the horse, he would have thought more than likely that the plow handles were intended to serve the same purpose as shafts on a buggy.

Uncle Phil came down tolerably early, ostensibly to witness the beginning of operations, but he called Colonel Grayson to one side, and with a little ceremony of a confidential and mysterious purport, dropped some yellow coins in his hand, saying: "Manda 'lowed as how Mars Howard home yo' mought wan' a leetle money."

"That is very thoughtful of you. Uncle Phil. How much is left?"

"Right peart heap, Mars Rodeny. I brung yo' mo' termorrer?"

"I will let you know, Uncle Phil. Times are not such as to encourage one in a display of ready money. Wait a few days yet until we see if these soldiers disturb us again."

Colonel Grayson came forward chinking the gold in his hand. "You see our bank has not suspended payment," he said. "As you know, I placed with Uncle Phil for safe keeping our silver plate and a quantity of gold coin that I had on hand when the war was brought down into this Section. He proved, probably with the connivance of Aunt Manda, a closer banker than I had anticipated; for when the dark days came and the South was in such straits for money, I went to him for the balance. I thought we could do without it, and that we had not the moral right to withhold a cent; but do you reckon he would give

it up? Not Uncle Phil! He brought us regularly our accustomed allowance for meat and bread, but not a penny more. Mary Lou saved a large portion of this and I carried it to our camps, but no argument or plea or threat could dislodge his purpose to keep back the bulk of it. I even read to him the story of Ananias and Sapphira, and still he was obdurate, the only time in his life that he stood out against the plain word of the Scriptures. He said he was keeping it until Howard came home."

"Dat was Manda, Mars Rodeny," said Uncle Phil, not without pride in his own independence, for all he gave his wife the greater part of the credit. "She 'lowed as how I was keepin' hit fo' Mars Howard. She nerr lemme git no mo' as jes' so much, an' Manda she mighty peart at countin.' An,' an' yo' knows, Mars Rodeny, Manda am monst'ous parseverin'."

After this little matter of finance was arranged, Uncle Phil withdrew to the shade of the nearest tree and contributed volumes of advice, and after each mishap, fairly bristled with admonition. The plow hung to a snag, and one of the handles gave the lieutenant a humiliating thrust under his guard, landing plump on the ribs.

"Doan I tolle yo', Mister Manning? She mighty pesterin' ole plow; she breck yo' laig nex'. I knowed dat ole plow 'fore Mars Rodeny war borned; she mighty on'ry."

For all the unpromising beginning and the continued breakdowns and discouragements the work went on, and before noon quite an expanse of weed and foul grass had been torn up, and the

black earth laid open for a respectable planting. The soil was dry and hard, already baked by the shriveling drought that followed the ravages of war in the South and lasted through the summer of 1865. But our farmers were hopeful and determined. They could not believe that nature would refuse to nourish their handiwork. Accordingly, a quantity of seed-corn was brought from pole stringers in the attic where it had hung unclaimed these four seasons, and by night a crop was in the ground.

The following day this performance with horse and plow was repeated in Major Lewis's garden. The Major looked on for a time, and then withdrew to the shade for a little self-communion, but Mrs. Lewis interrupted his monologue by coming out to enquire how the work progressed.

"Magnificently, my dear, magnificently," he answered, with mock enthusiasm. "Self-reliance is a beautiful thing in real life, but the reflection that the grandsons of General Mortimer Lewis and Captain Howard Grayson have no other vehicle than an old bull-tongue plow with which to show force of character, drove me into the shade to cuss the situation. Yet, if they have to work like niggers, they better do it here than to take a profession, for I still hold that tilling the soil is the gentleman's occupation."

"But this exuberance of spirits will soon work out, and then they will be willing to hire negroes to do their plowing," said Mrs. Lewis, with hope to pacify the Major's raging emotions.

"Take this chair, my dear. No, you don't want to go back to the house. Listen to me, for

I have an inward call to storm. What you said just now by way of encouragement is what I somewhat fear and most dread. If they should quit work, that would be the very devil — excuse the expression. If this zeal proves of hot-bed growth, its great shoots will wither under this burning sun, and then there will be nothing to show for it but an extra growth of rank weeds where they are breaking up the ground to-day. They would be discouraged, not for a day, but for life, and become worthless members of society. That would be the immediate result, and a very humiliating one for you and me. But the other possibility, and it looks like a very natural probability, pesters me for ultimate results. Those young gentlemen have no idea of being discouraged. It's not in their blood. If these efforts fail from lack of experience or bad weather, they will go at it again. They will succeed in the end. And then what have we? With self-made success and prosperity comes self-assertive manhood — at least, it's called manhood. The good Lord deliver us in the South from a race of self-made men! Then comes posterity that parts its name on one side, and hair in the middle! We have enough of those fellows in our social entertainments now. Think of it, two or three generations hence there may be a J. Walker, or a Z. Manning, Lewis! May the devil take the ticky thing for his own! Then, we are on the Yankee basis, which the best of them admit to me has come to mean: one generation between dirty shirt and dirty shirt. Such is self-made manhood, so-called, and such are its results. This plantation

may belong to a Lewis in one generation, and in the next to his Dutch overseer, who will call it his ‘varum,’ and who will cut the shade trees out of his pastures and plant the whole place to sauerkraut. Then after his soul goes to lager beer glory, a Lewis will have got money enough in making wooden nutmegs, or in a government contract, so that he can buy it back, with the graves of his ancestors, and the Dutchman’s into the bargain. Think of the time when your poor clay and mine shall be the chief consideration in a commercial transaction! Better that it plug a crack and stop a draught—but we can’t all be Cæsars.”

“But, Walker, the South will never come to that. Our civilization is too old. I think you are borrowing trouble in very large quantities. The Lord will preserve us from such unholy degeneration,” answered Mrs. Lewis.

“You will remember that I asked Him in my distress, to deliver us. I do not recant now in my calmer mood. I hope it is borrowed trouble. If it is, I promise solemnly to pay it back with interest, and I have kept all my obligations to this time. But, to tell the whole truth, I rebel at the loss of the nigger. He was in his God-given sphere at work on this plantation. It was best for him, enough sight better than loafing about the Freedmen’s Bureau studying deviltry with vagabond whites. I stand for the good of the nigger. What is good for him is good for me.”

“But, Walker, what is to be done?” asked Mrs. Lewis, quietly. She had ideas of her own, but realized that the Major had not finished.

“Oh, nothing, or wait, which amounts to the

same thing. A little time will show whether we are to become a people of bustle and greed, or to go on as a people of contentment and gentility. I am so scared of this damned — excuse the expression — self-madeness, that I am miserable all the time. My experience with that swelling, assertive class has been most unfortunate. We had better stay poor and take our place in the world with the despised ‘shabby genteel.’ I reckon I better carry a bucket of fresh water out to ‘the hands,’ now that my bile is worked off a bit. I don’t want to be a drone in this business. Will you walk back and lend to the work the encouragement of your smile? ”

“ If times change as you anticipate, Walker Lewis, you will be at the very head of the procession. You are not so devoid of ambition as you would have us believe,” said Mrs. Lewis.

“ No, my dear, you flatter me; I’m too lazy. I don’t mind a little work now and then, but do you know I took on a contempt for labor very early in life? Those Yankee-made copy books that we used down in the Old Field school, had stiffly written precepts about the dignity of labor, which I had to copy by the page, or take a flogging. You know what scorn I have for dignity — as Sterne says: ‘A mysterious carriage of the body to cover the defects of the mind.’ Dignity and labor; labor and dignity; dignity, labor. I don’t like either, and I hate the combination. No, this threatened change in our civilization is the work of the Devil, and I mean to avoid him at first, and resist him afterwards; but to swap my birthright for self-made manhood, never.”

They found the work going bravely on. The young men were begrimed with sweat and dust, but not dismayed. While they rested and ate a snack of corn bread, the conversation turned on the crop prospect.

True to the Major's prediction there was no discouraging the young men. They were at no time after the first two days moved with more than dogged determination. Enthusiasm seemed to give place to cool, calculating purpose, the quality that surmounts not one, but countless obstructions. So they soon overshot their original purpose to plant only a patch of corn, and prepared ground with elevated beds and walks between for a full assortment of garden truck. This they did without knowing where the seeds were to come from, but Felix Grayson, who often came that way in the alleged discharge of his duties, volunteered to supply them from the Bureau's storehouse.

"As a personal favor, Brother Rodeny," he said, patronizingly. "The department has an abundance and the negroes will not plant so long as we feed them; why should n't you have seeds? Besides, the Lord has pronounced a curse on him that heapeth up the corn, while his brother is in need."

"If not in violation of the rules of the department, Felix, I shall be glad to pay for as much as the young men need. It will save a trip to Nashville, and these are awkward times for us to travel. We will pay so long as we have money, for we are not beggars from the Federal Government. We surrendered to become supporters, not hangers-on."

"As you like; then I will sell you what you need."

Accordingly seeds were bought and paid for, and two full gardens were planted.

Then came the tedious and anxious season of waiting on a change in the weather. Day after day the heavens were scanned for a cloud, and if one appeared, no matter how small or how fluffy and woolly its texture, its possibilities were calculated, its course traced. They watched the sunrise for the lowering flush, and the sunset for the glow of promise, and such signs as their eager hope or wistful fancy discovered, failed with more than proverbial precision. An occasional spot of ground that contained some lingering moisture, shot up tiny yellow blades that shrivelled and withered in the broiling sun. It was not a go. Their crop was a sickening failure so far as any well-intended effort can fail.

But their spirits did not flag, nor did the work abate. Each for himself carried on rebuilding in such a manner that intelligence and determination seemed to supply fully the lack of experience and training. Great gaps in the rock walls were closed, not smoothly, but solidly. And the war on weeds was waged with the brush blade, instead of the plow.

The sight of gentlemen who had been raised to lives of elegance and ease, at work as common laborers in fields over which, before the war, they rode only to hunt or carry instructions to an overseer, was not uncommon at this period. Nearly all the soldiers who were to return were at home. All found the same fortune awaiting them and all

were afield. Everyone had his fill of war. He did not surrender while there was left one spark of hope, or one remnant of desperation.

Like a martial people, they appreciated and were grateful for the magnanimous terms made to them by the victors. They could not have asked so much. In fact, they had expected less. As a consequence, those who received this generous parole, had no thought but to keep it. Faith in Lincoln, and Grant, and Thomas, knew no limit. With the vanquished it was even more open and unbounded than it was at the North, where a spirit of vengeance, especially among those who had bled by proxy and substitute, deprecated the easy terms of peace.

But this parole, unprecedented though it was, bound the Government as well as the ex-confederate. The Government was not without its duties. It was obligated to protect the citizen who had returned to his allegiance, so long as he was law-abiding. And he had no other inclination or purpose. Peace and good-will were all he asked for — faith for faith. He asked for no sympathy. He stood like a man to receive the natural and reasonable consequences of his previous course, under the terms of his surrender. This penalty he had to surfeit in the devastation of his home, the suffering of his dear ones, the disorganization of social customs, the humiliation of his defeat. He only asked for an opportunity to repair, as best he could, the waste of four years of civil war, and to drive hunger from his fireside. Luxuries he had foresworn; necessities occupied his thought.

This purpose was best evidenced by his acts; he was at work. He had hoped, he had a right to expect, that he could do this work in peace.

Yet, common as was the spectacle, it seemed to possess a growing charm for worthless whites and renegade negroes. Scarcely a day passed that Howard Grayson and Manning Lewis had not each an audience, sometimes large and appreciative, from these classes, to note their operations. It seemed as if this proceeding was not only concerted, but a regular occupation, for when Manning and Howard met and compared experiences, they discovered that the uninvited guests of Elmington one day, appeared at Fairfax the next. And later on it was found that they made regular rounds of the neighborhood.

Not the least frequent of these visitors was Jonas Smith, whose promotion to authority had brought him a stock of energy. He was consumed with business engagements, but always took time from public service to stop and harass, as if it were a part of his official duty, some gentleman toiling with destruction. But Jonas had been a failure all his life. He was born to be of no account, and had early struck his lead, and this new employment, as results showed, was well-matched to his breeding and nicked perfectly with his genius. Some men are born with wonderful talent for being ignored. They fail to awaken in those with whom they come in contact either of the godlike attributes of friendship or sympathy, or even the human attributes of pity or contempt. So it was with Smith. With all his zeal and malice he never proselyted a convert to the gov-

ernment he served, and aroused only one man to deadly enmity. That man was Pleas.

It came about in this way: One day as Howard and Pleas were rebuilding an opening in the rock wall along the pike, the sheriff and posse stopped to mark the progress of the work. Smith was talkative, and said: "Yo' take a-hole of thet work mighty peart, Cap'n. Whar did yo' larn farmin'? Yo' air a good han'. I am thinkin' of buyin' a plantation on the waters of ole Opal an' I would n't min' hirin' yo' fo' overseer."

"Oh, thank you, Smith, I have all I can oversee right here, for the present. Between putting this place to rights, and listening to the annoyances of officers I reckon I shall be right busy for a time."

"No damage done, Cap'n, no damage done. If yo' wan' a cash job, yo' knows whar to hunt hit," said the sheriff.

"I reckon it is sometimes well to know where one can find a cash job, but I shall have to do with what I can get out of this."

When the posse rode on, Pleas said: "Dat Jonas Smith git hisself hu't, an' hu't bad, he doan min'. He come 'long hyear insultin' ge'men, case dey wuck."

"He can't insult us, Pleas. Nothing he can say can touch us. We are not in his class, and can't be," replied Howard.

"He git hisself hu't, yo' hyear Pleas a-talkin'. Hit may not be terday, ner termorrer, but he git hu't. We doan teck no mo' he smart talk."

Two days after, the offense was repeated with added contumely, and to Howard's surprise Pleas

gave the posse the encouragement of a forced laugh and a sly wink. Later in the day, when they were alone, he said: "I reckons I move outn de house, to de qua'ters, Mars Howard."

"What does that mean, Pleas? Your room is more comfortable than any of the cabins. I don't understand this."

"Yo' won' tell Mars Rodeny? Say yas. I's goan jine dis League, de Union League, or Loil League, dat meets at Kosciusko. Mars Rodeny mought not like hit, but I's goan jine."

"Of course you can join it if you want to, but what for?"

"Doan zactly know, but I been studyin' 'bout hit sence day 'fore yistiddy, and I's goan jine."

"You are a free man, Pleas, and have a right to join the Union League if you want to. But there is something back of all this that you don't want to tell me," said Howard.

"I doan know what back, or front of hit, Mars Howard; I's goan jine, an' doan wan' Mars Rodeny to know. I nerr jine 'thout yore knowin'."

There was such an air of mystery about the negro that, for a time, Howard regretted that he had been so free with his consent. He knew well enough that Pleas was not in sympathy with the League, and that he despised the negroes who spent most of their nights in its meetings. None of them had been about soliciting his membership, and where could he have acquired so suddenly the notion? There was some scheme plotting in his mind, yet Pleas had been always the most straightforward and disingenuous of creatures. It might be bravado, it might be curiosity, it might be that

he feared mischief was being plotted against them, and he thought he could best serve his master by knowing what was going on behind drawn curtains and locked doors. So the subject was dropped, and Howard helped to prepare the way for Pleas to change his room for one of the cabins back of the house, without arousing the suspicion or opposition of Colonel Grayson.

XIII

THE GLORIOUS CLIMATE OF CANADA

THE next day while the Graysons were at dinner, Pleas came into the house carrying a perfumed card which he handed to the Colonel.

"Here, Howard, read the name, please, my glasses are not at hand. My eyes are too old for such fine script."

Howard took the card, glanced at the name, and dropped it near Mary Lou, as if it had burned his fingers. She read aloud: "John Dodge." Mary Lou and her foster-father exchanged glances. Howard looked intently at the plate before him. No one spoke for a full minute. At last Colonel Grayson recovered from his surprise and asked: "Where is Mr. Dodge, Pleas?"

"Out'n de front, suh, in de span'est kerrige yo' err seen."

"Go out quickly and take his horse and tell him to come in. For once, surprise made me forget the hospitality due from this house. I must be getting old and weak. Run-out, boy, and hold his horse," said Colonel Grayson, with marked impatience toward himself.

"He got two hosses, Mars Rodeny," said Pleas with tantalizing deliberation, as he looked at Howard, expecting him to speak.

"Well, take them both, and be quick about it," answered the Colonel.

"Will you excuse me, Father? I prefer to see Mr. Dodge for the first time outside our house, where I won't be under the ban of hospitality," said Howard.

"You had better remain and say 'how-dy,' then withdraw if you like. There will be an abundance of time to see him after to-day," replied the Colonel.

"As you say, Father; but I fear I shall show my contempt for a coward, in spite of myself."

Just then heavy footsteps were heard shuffling down the hall, and a loud, husky voice of some one talking to himself, said: "Perfectly natural; just like coming home," and the burly form of Mr. Dodge filled the dining-room door.

"How are you, Colonel Grayson, my old friend and neighbor? Glad to see you; hope you're all well. Ah, Miss Mary Lou, prettier than ever! And Howard, my boy, you're looking well. This don't look like war, just the same sweet and happy family as of yore. How are you all?" This Mr. Dodge delivered without seeming to take breath. In fact, it used to be said that he never took breath, that breath was forever going out of him. While yet he was speaking, Colonel Grayson extended his hand, and when he had an opportunity, answered: "I hope you are as well as you look, Mr. Dodge. We are in excellent health here, thank you. You took us entirely by surprise. We had not heard of your return. Won't you sit down and have some dinner?"

Mr. Dodge measured the scant prospect with a glance. "No, thanks, had dinner at Kosciusko. Just got in; took everybody by surprise.

Came through by freight; brought some horses and carriages. Thought the horse stock 'd be run down by the war. Can't drive a hack horse, you know, always loved a good horse. I'll have a few good mares to sell. Yes, my health 's good, thanks. That Northern climate 's wonderful stuff — bracing, invigorating. No liver trouble there. I left here a sick man, awfully sick, but in less 'n a month I was a new man. Have n't seen a sick day since, but now I 've been off the cars only three hours and my tongue is coated. My teeth are all covered with fur. This is a horrible climate for a man with a liver." And he made the usual grimace of a healthy man trying to convince others that he is sick.

"But it is much healthier now than it was two months ago," Colonel Grayson put in at the first lull.

"Yes, yes, I guess so," answered Mr. Dodge, quickly. He did not want to surrender the floor until he had made his case. "But you know I was sick in the spring of '61; had to get away; and as luck would have it, went to the right place exactly, Hygeia Springs, Canada, just across the river. Fine air, sparkling water, no malaria — the very place for a man dying of biliousness. Got well in a few days, and then got into business; great country for business the last four years. Wanted to come back and cast my lot with my people down here, but could n't leave my business. Was kind of speculating, and had to watch my irons. They burn quickly up there if they are n't watched."

"I reckon then you have closed out and have

returned to live with us?" enquired Colonel Grayson. "We shall be glad to welcome you b—"

"Yes, I'm all cleaned up," Mr. Dodge broke in, without letting Colonel Grayson finish. "Thanks for the welcome. I knew I'd be welcomed back to old Williams County, especially as I brought a carload of the finest horses that ever looked through a collar. Yes, if I can stand the climate, I'll stay. I'd like awfully well to go back North and be in business a few years — business is business there now. Money is money. If you need any money, old friend, don't hesitate to call. You know I'm always ready for business. By the way, do you know where Margaret is? She gave me the slip up North, and played me a nice trick to boot. Oh, she's her father's daughter, she's smart. You were a soldier in our cause, Howard. Did you see her? Or were n't you in a hospital?"

"I was a soldier, Mr. Dodge, but did not see Miss Margaret, and have not heard from her since she went away with you, for your health. I was fortunate enough to make no hospital record," answered Howard.

"I had two letters from her," said Mary Lou, looking guiltily at her brother, "but they were badly delayed in the mails. She was in a hospital, near Atlanta, nursing our wounded soldiers, and in poor health."

"This blasted climate again. She ran away from me in less 'n a week — as soon as she saw I was out of danger — leaving behind a foolish note in which she said she was going to be a nurse. I

feared she could n't get through the lines to our army, but she did. I afterwards got two letters, but our mail service down here was awfully bad. That's one reason we failed, mail service so bad. I tell you we can't do business without mail service, and we can't carry on war without business behind to support it. Up North the Yankees went to the war at first; but they soon got wise and hired substitutes to do the fighting, and stayed at home themselves and did the business. Lots of business during exciting times. People don't stop to ask the price. And let me tell you, the man who don't ask the price before he buys, gets roasted, roasted good and hot. Lots of lying and cheating; can't believe anybody; have to do business on your own judgment. No such thing as personal honor. If a man calls you a liar, just tell him he 's another, and both are right and no feelings hurt. They don't fight over such a little thing as being called a liar, for they know that it is bound sooner or later to be true. To one who has lived down here where every man's statement goes for truth, whether or no, all this seemed strange. Down here a gentleman's word is always good, although his written promise to pay may sometimes fail. We have always gone on the theory that the law will take care of the written obligation, and that every gentleman ought to protect his word. Up there one has no security unless the agreement is signed, sealed, witnessed, and stamped with a revenue sticker. I didn't like it at first, but business was so lively I soon fell into the ways of the country. I can't remember that it used to be so in the East, but I suppose

it was, for there are millions of New England people in the Northwest, and a Yankee's a Yankee wherever you find him. All kinds of business are good — merchandizing, trading, government contracting, and lending money. And then there were millions made buying and selling substitutes. Perfectly legitimate business, and all cash. The substitute's a good fighter, and makes a respectable corpse in uniform, with a flag wrapped around him, ha! ha! But I must find Margaret — she's my only child. I got to talking again and forgot her. Near Atlanta! I suppose there are lots of hospitals near Atlanta, and it might be a big job to find her. I guess I'll write — but, no, I must find her for certain. You see, the rascal played it on her father. She took the notion into her head before we left here that I was going to sell the old home place, where her grandmother, her mother, and herself all were born, and where her mother is buried. Foolish notion, but she wouldn't give it up. She would n't move a peg to go with her poor sick father, until he promised to give her a deed to a hundred acres, taking in the house and burial yard. Well, I promised, thinking she would forget it next day. But trust Margaret not to forget! She gave me no peace, sick as I was, until that deed was signed, executed, and delivered to her. And then she took 'French leave,' as I have told you. I must find her."

Howard and Mary Lou exchanged glances, and a calm came over the face of the young man that it had not worn since he returned home.

"Something must be done, and that right quickly," said Colonel Grayson. "Suggest what you would like us to do."

"I thought at first we'd write to some of the authorities in Atlanta, but mails are uncertain, even now. Perhaps we'd best to telegraph, but that is expensive. What shall I do, my old friend? Help me with your advice."

"By all means, drive at once to Kosciusko, and telegraph to the Provost-Marshal at Atlanta, and he will answer you directly," said Colonel Grayson. "In a matter like this there can be no uncertainty. We should have undertaken it long ago had Mary Lou told us that Miss Margaret was sick. For some reason, probably a good one, she has not mentioned it before."

"I could not, Father," said Mary Lou.

"Well, come on, Howard, and go with me to Kosciusko. I will see if that deed has been placed on record, and then telegraph to Atlanta. I want to get settled down and go to business; can't lose time; must get that deed back and Margaret home, sick or well, and then start into business. Suppose things are mightily run down at the house. Just drove into the yard and saw Uncle Sam a minute; did n't get out of the carriage. What do you suppose he was doing? Good old nigger, but he's got no business sense! He was carrying water in an old cracked gourd, from the spring away up to the burial yard to sprinkle the flowers on Mrs. Dodge's grave. Faithful old creature, but not capable of making a living. Yes, he's pretty old for that. He said he had seen rather tough sledding since I left, especially the last year. You see I was n't here to feed him. Said something about Miss Mary Lou giving him some clothes and food, but I was looking at a gap in

the rock wall and did n't quite catch his remark. He 's his own man now that he 's free, and I don't suppose I 'm liable for his support, though Margaret will probably take a different view of the matter when she gets here. Have Federals bothered you? They are getting awfully smart. Officers from up North are sending home all sorts of valuable things; confiscation they call it. I call it robbery. One colonel in Detroit sent up a whole outfit of family portraits, taken from the house of one of our families in the South. He was no relation to them, and what could he want of the pictures? He could n't sell them for a cent! Strange, ain't it!"

"We have heard of those things being done in other parts of the South, but not here. General Thomas, in command of this division, is too much of a gentleman, and too high-minded a soldier to permit such an outrage," said Colonel Grayson.

"So I understand. They 've confiscated some of my land, but I don't expect to have any trouble about it. I 'll get good rent for it out of the Government. I know Congressman Challoner, of Michigan, intimately. I got him a substitute for eight hundred dollars, when the regular dealers wanted a thousand; and, as sly as you keep it, I made two hundred on the deal besides the fifty old Challoner gave me out of sheer gratitude. He 'll work my claim through Congress; just watch me make out a bill! Let 's be going. Confound it all, I got to talking again and forgot that deed, and Margaret. Come on, Howard. Good-bye, my old friend and neighbor, until we meet again; good-bye, Miss Mary Lou." And he hustled down

the hall, followed by Howard, who had forgotten his resentment.

The contradictory character of John Dodge had been the one perennial problem of Williams County since he dropped into this community twenty-five years before this history begins, a teacher in Mr. Nash's academy. He came from Harvard with the recommendation of his professor in mathematics, a thing easily secured by one of Dodge's patronizing manner. For a while he filled the limited requirements of an instructor in a preparatory academy, but devoted most of his time to studying, and adjusting himself to the new conditions by which he found himself surrounded. Born and brought up in the abolition atmosphere of New England, he had entertained very radical views on the subject of slavery; but now he found himself put to the alternative of changing these views or returning to the North. There were better possibilities in the South, so he set to the not difficult task of proselytizing himself. This he had to do or leave Tennessee, for whatever he thought or believed, he had to speak and speak often. He was a person who was radical on every subject, after he had decided which course he would best pursue.

At that time the country was torn with threatened nullification. South Carolina was attracting the attention of the world with her own peculiar views on the rights of the Sovereign State. So, being a creature of extremes, he not only adopted the creed of slavery, but went to the very limit and became a rabid Nullifier. He made speeches, wordy and vehement, and proclaimed his purpose

to leave Tennessee and emigrate to the headquarters of his new doctrine, in order that Mr. Calhoun might have the benefit of his valuable support; but as South Carolina bade fair to place herself in open rebellion with the rest of the country and there was a tinge of possible danger, he continued to teach fractions and decimals in Mr. Nash's academy, and to submit to discipline from the worthy headmaster, who did not share his extreme views. This seemed to chafe him somewhat, but his valor succumbed to prudence, and he ceased to appear in public debates, and all went well for a time.

But it so befell that Colonel Saunders, a very prosperous planter whose place adjoined Elmington, was a States' Rightser of the most radical sort, and he took the fledgling into his confidence and counsel. Here young Dodge found consolation and tutelage, and the twain passed nearly every evening, after school hours, in promulgating to each other, with great vehemence of argument, the doctrine of nullification.

And Mr. Dodge soon found that he had builded better than he knew. Colonel Saunders had a daughter somewhat past the age of matrimonial expectancy, and several years the senior of the young tutor, who came to exhibit deep interest in those political discussions, and was not without sympathy for the political offender. To curtail a long recital, which might seem to the reader to partake more of neighborhood gossip than of serious history, the forces of nullification in that community were united by the bond of matrimony, and, on the invitation of Colonel Saunders, were mobilized under his roof.

Straightway, the young man forgot his political enthusiasm, and confined his discussions to an after-dinner debate over a mint julep or a toddy, leaving the propagation of the heresy in the world at large to Colonel Saunders.

With the same zeal that he displayed in the cause of nullification, he now plunged into matters domestic. At home he talked and bustled about affairs on the plantation, and abroad he ceased not to persuade young gentlemen of the blissful condition of the marriage state, and to exhort them to follow his example. This mania lasted for a few years, and was followed by one for hunting, which filled the house-yard with loud-mouthed, sheep-killing hounds, that never were led to the chase but were a constant nuisance to the neighborhood.

So it went on from one harmless fad to another, until the year '61, when Mr. Dodge suddenly became seized with the idea that he was a very sick man, and must make a radical change in climate, and for once he did more than talk. In the meantime Colonel Saunders and Mrs. Dodge had died; and John Dodge found himself, half by inheritance and half as guardian for his minor daughter, Miss Margaret, lord of the Saunders homestead, which seemed to his ever enthusiastic fancy to comprise a goodly portion of the habitable globe.

And now he was back with a new fad, business. His sojourn in the North during the war had filled him with the same exaggerated notions of business that he had previously entertained on other subjects. Evidently he had made a few trades, and as he was too thrifty to take chances, he had in all probability bettered his financial condition. In

all these different aspects of his mood, he had been a man of good domestic habit, always a kind, and at times an affectionate husband and father, a peaceable and a conciliatory neighbor, a man of integrity, perhaps because he lived in an atmosphere of honesty, a man with few friends and no enemies. He had no qualities except good humor that men could love. He was too spontaneous and childish to be hated.

The sun was going down, a red, drouthy ball, when Howard and Mr. Dodge returned. Colonel Grayson and Mary Lou were sitting on the front veranda, noting the dry promise of the closing day.

"How coarse in appearance and manner Mr. Dodge has grown since he went North," said Mary Lou.

"Yes, he has taken on much flesh, and appears to have added persistence to his bustling manner," answered Colonel Grayson. "The persistent man is the most rude and tiresome of all creatures, and I regret to mark the change in Mr. Dodge. He was a splendid neighbor, a man of excellent intentions. But he has been always a creature of environment, so easily influenced for good or ill—not that I think he would readily follow into bare-faced immorality. But he likes to do whatever he sees others do, especially those for whom he has a liking or in whom he has confidence. I hope he will settle down on the old place and resume a quiet life again."

"He appeared positively gross to me in that flashy suit of clothes, and reeking with perfumery. If I had not known him favorably before, and if

he were not Margaret's father, I should hope he did not come again," replied Mary Lou.

"I noticed all that, Mary Lou, and more, but don't you think you are a little moved by prejudice?" asked Colonel Grayson.

"Possibly so, Father. I can not conquer my dislike for a cowardly man, and I can not treat him as I am inclined to do. How different Margaret is! All the sweetness and gentleness of her mother, and all the force of her grandfather. You do not know her story yet, but when you do you will admire her more than ever."

"I have believed her capable of any good deed, and have looked for her to come to a beautiful life," said Colonel Grayson. "Suspend judgment on Mr. Dodge a few weeks, until he has again fallen in with his old surroundings."

As the carriage drew up through the trees, Mary Lou rose and walked impatiently back and forth, and before it stopped she called out: "What news, Brother? Did you find her?"

"Yes, yes, we heard from her," answered Mr. Dodge, without giving Howard a chance. "In a hospital all right, in Atlanta, and sick — awfully sick, I believe. Telegraph dispatch said nerves broken down, but she is dying of biliousness, probably." He stopped his horse close to the steps and seemed on the verge of nervous collapse, as he cried: "What shall I do, my good friend and neighbor? You've advised me so many times, and so well! She will die if she is left there without some special attention."

"Somebody must go after her, and Mary Lou is the person — "

"Yes, yes, Miss Mary Lou is just the good Samaritan for that deed," he cut in, before Colonel Grayson had got well started. "They have been such friends; yes, Miss Mary Lou will cheer her up and bring her home pretty quick. When will you go?"

"Of course she can not go unattended," said Colonel Grayson. "Aunt Manda would be of service and some protection, but a man must go—I must go. I have not taken the oath of allegiance, but I will waive all scruples and qualify for the journey."

"Oh, thanks, a thousand thanks, my old friend and neighbor. I am right at home again. No other place in this world has such true women, such noble men. It's worth more 'n business, after all's said and done. I can't go, can't leave my horses. The Yankees would carry them off, or the negroes hamstring them the first night. It's awfully good of you to go! The deed was n't on record; in fact there are no records. Yankee soldiers spread all the papers and court files on the floors of the court-house to make beds, and now all our public documents and legal documents are in a pile. We saw a negro lighting his pipe with a strip torn off somebody's will. It's going to be up-hill work, doing business in this chaos. What do you suppose it will cost to bring Margaret home?'"

Mary Lou turned and walked away to hide her disgust. Colonel Grayson, who never failed to excuse a fault in others, answered calmly: "I reckon one hundred dollars will cover the ex-

penses, unless we should be detained in Atlanta longer than I anticipate."

"Better take two hundred; don't want you to be pinched for ready money. I want Margaret home. She'll get well here in no time. Some fathers would be mad at a daughter that played such a trick, but I'm not! No, siree, I'm proud of her! She's got all of her father's spunk, and is as gentle and sweet as her mother was. I'll give you gold, Colonel Grayson, and you best get the rates of premium as you go through Nashville. Look out for the rates of premium, or they will cheat you. But no, we are not up North, are we? I clear forgot. Will you start in the morning? Yes, that's good, too."

XIV

THE SIGHT OF A BOOM TOWN

THE next morning Mary Lou brought down from its hiding in the store-room, her summer hat of the mode of 1861. The decorations that formed the greater part of that mysterious article of apparel and ornament, bore evidences of age in unconquerable lines and wrinkles. But what it lacked in freshness and newness of material, was more than met in correctness of pattern; for Dame Fashion with her iron hand had not invaded the South these four long years, and there were no recent dictates on size and conformity. For once in the history of the world the possession of finery fixed a style, imperious and final, against which the votaries of Mammon could not prevail. Each woman pressed, smoothed, curled, and reshaped as most suited her taste, the material she had in use or in store when the blockade began. And thus was developed an individuality—not the individuality of a milliner in Paris, before whose whim the ornamental headgear of the feminine world towers aloft or spreads out—but of millions of women, who, each for herself, did with her own what seemed best and most appropriate. The conditions that made this possible, or necessary, were deplorable; but the results, to every observer of the servility of woman to designing vogue, were most encouraging. And herein lay true heroism, for it is claimed by all cynics and

some philosophers, that it comes easier and more natural for the feminine mind to circumvent the commands of Jehovah than to defy the decrees of Fashion.

If specific proof of these observations were needed, it could be had in the case of Miss Mary Lou Grayson; for either the simple hat of her own arrangement, or the excitement of preparation for her trip, had wrought such a transformation in her appearance, that, as she came down from the house to take her seat beside Colonel Grayson in Mr. Dodge's carriage, there was a general exclamation of delight at the vision of beauty she presented.

"Oh, Little Sister, how sweet you look!" cried Howard, as he took her in his arms and implanted a kiss on the roses in each cheek. "Again you are like my little sister of the old days." And he whispered something in her ear, evidently a message to Margaret, for he blushed crimson.

"Yes, yes, only don't muss me up, or I shall have to keep father waiting till I go back and prink again," she answered, with feminine solicitude.

"Ah, she will charm Margaret back to health. When I was up North for my health, I saw no such beauties; no, siree, they don't compare!" said Mr. Dodge, as he offered his hand, with a flourish of awkward gallantry, to help her into the carriage.

And this was no idle flattery, for she was indeed a beautiful creature. Enough above the average height in woman to be called tall, willowy enough in form to fix the attention of the

least sentimental observer, there was yet an indescribable quality that more attracted. It was a sort of delicate, unstudied independence, a free spirit, that prompted her, while out of doors at home, to carry a sunbonnet in her hand, and wear a flower in her hair; or to let her long blonde tresses flow to the wind and sun, regardless of tangling and bleaching. But her face was not quite of classic mold. The forehead was too high and broad and intellectual; the great blue eyes were too alert for the proper expression of languor. Yet every line and feature stood unmistakably for refinement of nature and daintiness of sentiment; every glance of the eye, or change in the mobile countenance, bespoke intelligent purpose and strength of character. The man who looked at her must have said, "Beautiful!" If he looked, and considered a moment, he said, "Beautiful and strong!"

This was the first appearance of Colonel Grayson and daughter in a wheeled vehicle since the soldiers had infested Elmington, and burned the barns and their contents. It was a beautiful morning in that land of beautiful days and glorious nights. The withering drought was yet new and had made few inroads upon nature, which was, in her own peaceful way, still struggling to repair the ravages of war. The dry, red sun shone with threatening splendor, and shaded the blue dome of the heavens with a cool gray coloring. It was not a time of growth — vigorous, hearty, spontaneous growth. There was in the summer air that peculiar fragrance of premature ripening, as if the course of the season had been

interrupted, or as if harvest had been precipitated before its time. This strange sensation of distemper pervading their little patch of universe seemed but a continuation of the strife of war, only the action was shifted from man to the elements. Intangible though it was, it comported well with the torn fields, the gullied hill-sides, the wrecked buildings and fences; in fact, with the permeating and inexorable presence of destruction.

And yet there was peace in the air. The songs of the thrush and the oriole were echoed back by the robin and the lark. The bee hummed by on his industrious mission, and the countless voices of animate nature bespoke no conflict. The Opal flowed down the valley in easy, sweeping curves, and when the course of the turnpike approached its side, its babbling voice contained no threat. The encircling hills, fringed with green that followed and softened their jagged outlines, seemed to shut out the wrangling, rebellious world, or rather, to include and shelter this quiet little world within their protecting embrace.

These conflicting sentiments of nature touched the responsive character of Mary Lou, and for a time she rode in silence, almost unconscious of the conversation of her foster-father. At last, as they passed a field in which fortifications had been raised and the turf all torn up, he aroused her from her reverie.

“How conciliatory is old Nature! Man cuts and destroys and ravishes, but she mends and puts forth anew, seeming to defy his labor to deface. Only neglect can stir her to resentment,

and I sometimes think that in this valley she would smile through blue-grass and flowers at his indolence and negligence."

"I was studying when you spoke, on the wonderful beauty with which I have been surrounded ever since I can remember. We do not appreciate, until we get into the bleak gray of the mountains or the flat, inanimate prairies, what lively beauties in line and color embower us. Sure we can say with the poet, 'Only man is vile,' and in this community the vile man is of recent creation. Do you think, Father, we shall be molested again by those dreadful officers at Kosciusko?"

"I hope not, my dear, although their villainy seems to know no bounds. They seemed determined to drive us to resentment. I am getting to agree with Major Lewis that this persecution has a purpose: to create a disturbance that they may have something to report to the Federal authorities. If everything here is quiet, their occupations are gone, and they will be sent home to work for a living. But after I take the oath of allegiance perhaps we shall be in better standing. We shall hope so at least."

"I was thinking how unfortunate it would be if we were disturbed after Margaret is brought home, especially if she is in bad health. I am so troubled about her! I ought to have spoken of her condition before, but she bound me to perfect silence. Why, I don't know, but for some reason on account of brother, I reckon. She sent me a sealed packet in her last letter that was to be given to Howard, in case she never lived to

return. She did not seem to think she was going to die, but was anxious to provide for the worst. And in case she recovered, she wanted him never to know of the packet or its contents. So, there, I have told all my secret without intending to tell anything."

"But that is not serious," answered the Colonel. "I am placing great store on the safe return of Margaret, for then our immediate circle is again complete. We have worlds to be thankful for. Our property losses are heavy, our sufferings from privations have been keen, and the humiliations and insults often intolerable, but our families are unbroken. In this we can give thanks beyond any other like community in the South, I reckon."

"That is true, Father; but we never are quite satisfied. There always is something to be wished for that absorbs our thoughts almost to the exclusion of gratitude. Now, it is the fear that this change in the affairs of the South will change our customs. I know little of the North—I have known very few Yankees—but those whom I have seen are so much like Mr. Dodge has been since he returned. Why, he really seemed more solicitous about that paltry deed than he did about Margaret's health, or life even. Shall we ever fall to that level, do you think?" asked Mary Lou, with genuine anxiety.

In fact that was the question of the hour for the educated portion of a great people, inhabiting the stretch of country lying south of the Ohio River.

"That is the problem that time and the course of events will have to settle. I can not proph-

esy what the end will be. There has been a marvelous change in our material condition, and historians always have laid great stress on the fact that material surroundings affect a people's civilization. If we are able to withstand the encroachments of greed, we shall demonstrate that we have what we have so long claimed: the highest and most genuine civilization the world ever has seen. But if we fall into the commercial spirit of the North, it will show that our civilization depended on the questionable institution of human slavery. For one, I believe in the honesty and sincerity of our social fabric, and that we shall continue, as we have been, the social and intellectual leaders of this great country."

"I hope so, Father!" answered Mary Lou. "It seems like everybody here is talking about this matter, and that there is a great variety of opinion."

They had reached town, and Colonel Grayson drove straight to the office of the Provost-Marshal to take the oath of allegiance. This dignitary, Christopher Samson, by name, had not been satisfied with quarters in one of the many vacant store buildings in Kosciusko, but had gone to the very outskirts of the city and had forcibly entered and taken possession of the finest place in that section of Tennessee, temporarily vacant.

The Bosworth house had been for many years the richest in Williams County. Built and furnished with a degree of cost and extravagance beyond any other home in the vicinity, its ostentation had made for Mr. Bosworth the title of the "Tennessee Yankee." But now every male

member of the family was dead, and the mother and daughter, on their return from the far South, found their house occupied by the Provost-Marshal and his gang, their furniture and ornaments, sacred as adjuncts of a once happy home, profaned by ill use, and themselves denied the right of entrance. Every entreaty and demand for possession was met with boorish assertion of authority, and they became in consequence dependent on the hospitality of old neighbors, while they waged unequal contest for their own. It was little wonder that they asked of the great man, and of themselves, over and over again: "What have we done that these remaining ties to a happiness that can be only a memory, should be denied us?"

But the man of the strong name only answered: "It suits me to stay here, and the Government needs the house." And there the matter rested.

When Colonel Grayson drove up to the great house, there was no sign of life within. Doors were closed and curtains were drawn, to all appearances as the surviving Bosworths had left them when they carried their grief to the gulf shore, a year before. Even the patrol from the neighbouring camp, that had stood watch and ward by day and night over this precious officer of the Federal Government, had been withdrawn, for no sentry challenged their entrance. But the Colonel was there for a purpose, and knew full well that it was already past hours for the opening of ordinary business, so he got down from the carriage and gave the great brass knocker a few lusty whacks. A negro porter opened the door, after peeping from behind curtains and undoing some heavy

bars, placed there by the present occupant. He proved to be no other than James, a yellow-skinned negro who had been a refractory slave at Elmginton, and who had led his brethren in a body, except Uncle Phil and Aunt Manda, out of captivity the first dark night after the Freedmen's Bureau began giving free rations at Kosciusko.

"Mawnin', Marster; mawnin', Miss Mary Lou," he said, forgetting his independence and new-taught equality, and dropping unconsciously into the servility of a slave.

"Good-morning, James! Where is the Provost-Marshal this morning?" asked Colonel Grayson.

"De Cunnel not outn baid yit, Marster. He doan git up no how 'till 'bout dis time de day," said James, looking up at the sun, for with all his new learning he had not been taught to use the clock. "An' dis mawnin' I reckons hit 'll be later, case he hed a party las' night dat hild tol'able late." And with perceptible pride the African told how, on the previous night, the Provost-Marshal had given an orgie in honor of Captain Brewster, until to-day in command of the company of Federal soldiers that had been stationed there for some months. "Dey sutnly mus' hev drunk a power of liquor, fo' yo' nerr seen sech a muss. Em-m, de ca'pets an' cu'tains an' furnitur', all ruin'; but dey doan keer fo' dat, de Gov'ment furnish de money. Dey mus' been monst'ous seek. All de gemmen of de Bureau, Cap'n Jonas Smiff, an' all de big men wus hyear, 'cept Cap'n Av'ry, he doan come."

"Who is Captain Avery, James?" asked Colonel Grayson, with some surprise.

"Our Cap'n Av'ry, Marster. He come to take Cap'n Brewster place," said James, in a rather loud tone, proud that he could impart knowledge to his late owner.

"Is that you talking down there, Jim?" asked a thick, heavy voice from a room up stairs.

"I reckons hit war," answered James, in a much subdued tone.

"Well, shut your damned mouth and go about your business, or I'll come down there and break every bone in your accursed carcass. If you don't know better than to disturb me when I'm asleep, I'll learn you. Now shut up!"

"Dat's him," whispered James.

"But it is important that I see him," said Colonel Grayson. "I am here on business pertaining to his office, and must attend to it before noon."

"Did n't I tell you to shut your black mouth?" came the thick, inebriated voice from behind the curtains.

"A gemmen wan' to see yo' on business, he say," said James, in most humble manner.

"Tell him to come back in two hours, and then keep still, you damned fool nigger," answered the beastly voice from above.

Colonel Grayson took his seat in the carriage and drove out of the yard, lest Mary Lou should be obliged to listen to more offensive conversation, for the voice foreboded any possible depravity.

"Let's drive down to where the negroes are living, if you are willing, Father. I should like to see some of our old slaves."

At the time this history is laid there was not in Kosciusko, nor in any other city of the South, that peculiar subdivision subject to overflow in the spring and to chills and fever the rest of the year, now known as the "Negro Quarter." There were few cabins or houses in which the negroes could live, as only a small proportion of townspeople had been able to own and keep slaves. To the time of his liberation the African was a countryman, a child and lover of nature. He took on the city habit with other virtues in the job-lot of free and enlightened citizenship. There were not in the city of Kosciusko suitable accommodations for more than two hundred negroes, and these, by reason of the progenitive wealth of the colored race, were always filled to overflowing.

But this condition had no terrors. For when Liberty — her pockets bulging with Government rations — stretched forth her jewelled hand and beckoned them to a life of indolence, they answered the call without a thought of where they should lay their heads. They came by hundreds, for the most part without the providence to bring such household appliances as their cabins on the plantations contained. Here was food from Uncle Sam's abundant storehouse, free for the asking, and no work!

What more could they want?

To eat, and not to work, had been the dream of the unfortunate race.

But they were equal to the crisis. Every rod of fence made the side wall of a house, perhaps the only wall it had; and poles, covered with brush or old army blankets, made the roof. Here they

slept, when not loafing or attending secret meetings for instruction in citizenship, with all the unconcern of the happy race they are. These rude quarters were mostly in alleys, because of the high fences that were so essential to their architecture and construction, and fully two thousand persons occupied them.

To this improvised town Colonel Grayson drove, after learning the business methods of the Provost-Marshal. He enquired for some of his old slaves, and a dozen loungers volunteered to show the way, but it was up the alley, and he could not drive there. He helped Mary Lou from the carriage, and was on the point of leaving the team in charge of some of the negroes, but she said : "No, Father, I can go alone; it is only a step. I will keep you but a few moments."

The dozen that had offered to show the way were augmented when she set forth by as many more, until she led a real cavalcade up the winding foot-path. - At the first turn in the path she met face to face, Captain Avery.

The surprise of the meeting was mutual, and neither had time to conceal emotions; but the feminine mind rallies quickest from surprise or predicament, and she said : "Good-morning, Captain Avery," in the most commonplace manner imaginable.

"Good-morning, Miss Grayson, this is a pleasant surprise to me. How have you been since I saw you last?" And he stood in the path, barring the way.

"Thank you, very well, sir. There has been plenty of color in life, but it has been about as it

was when you were encamped at Elmington — no material change, only a little variety of shading."

" You seem to be going through this labyrinth of huts unattended; may I be your escort?" he asked, stepping to one side to allow her to pass.

" It is unnecessary, thank you, for I am entirely at home with these poor people. Besides, these scenes might suggest to you, that, as an officer in the Federal army, you may have had something to do with bringing about the terrible conditions that prevail in this alley. I should not love to witness an awakening of your conscience. I will save an argument by admitting that you have one," she answered, and there was a tinge of sarcasm in her voice and manner.

" A challenge almost before you say good-morning! Now unless you point-blank forbid, I shall act as your military escort. Shall you never forgive me for being a Yankee, and a member of the Federal army?"

" I think it easier to pray for those who persecute us, than even to tolerate our enemies. But if you think a military escort will add dignity to my already cumbersome train, I will accept the service with becoming consideration." And Mary Lou started on up the alley, the Captain and darkies following. " I am looking for some of our old slaves," she continued, " and I have been told that they are some place near the heart of this model Yankee city."

" Had you any better neighbors after our command left Elmington?" he asked, willing to change the subject.

" Oh, no, ' better ' is not the word — ' worse '

is what you mean to ask. None are better; you are all bad, but some are worse than others, and toward the end you were bad beyond expression. We suffered enough, although I will admit that some of the officers made honest efforts to reduce the volume of our woe," she said, half banteringly.

"Very kind of you, I am sure, but no more than I expected you to feel, whether you would admit it or not. Have you been annoyed of late?" he enquired, with a view of continuing the conversation in his own direction.

"Not right lately, by Federal soldiers. The County Guards have not so entirely ignored us as we would like them to do."

"I am detailed now to command the troops at this point, and I shall hope, by putting a little heart into the business, to give it a different face. That is the plan of General Thomas," said the Captain.

"Father has great confidence in the justice of General Thomas, although we did not feel quite right when he deserted his State for the Federals. But that was four years ago. I hope, Captain Avery, you will find your new occupation a pleasant one."

Avery's answer never will be made, for he was cut clean out of the conversation by a tall, lean negro woman, who stood in the alley a short distance ahead of them, with arms akimbo, scolding a parcel of young ones that seemed to have raised her easy wrath. In the heat of her tirade she chanced to look up from the business in hand and caught sight of Mary Lou.

"Fo' de love of Gawd, honey, what yo' come

to dis mis'able place fo'?" And her tone and manner had undergone a change as complete as it was sudden. "Dis no place fo' a leddy likes yo', honey; but I's mighty proud to see yo'. I knowed yo' nerr fo'git yo' Aunt Harr'et. I done tolle Rufus so, I did. I wants to come back to Mars Rodeny, I does, indeed, but Rufus won'; he got shet of wuck, an' dat's all he wan'. How is yo'-all? Mars Howard home? Mars Rodeny well? I's mighty proud to see yo'!" And the tears streamed down her black face.

Mary Lou gave her all the information asked for, spoke kindly to the children, and showed such genuine interest in them all that the poor negro woman broke into sobs.

"I nerr wanted to leave. Rufus wen' plumb 'stracted 'bout lib'ty, an dis is hit, I reckon," she said between sobs, with a wave of her hand up and down the alley. "Please caint we come back, Miss Mary Lou? I be de bes' nigger yo' err seen. But Rufus won' come. He pres'dent de League, an' 'lows he goan to Congris, or somewhar."

"But don't the children go to school, Aunt Harriet? They ought to be learning all they can now," said Mary Lou.

"Naw, Miss, I doan wan' dem go to school. Dey doan wan' no eddycation. Dey wan' some one to beat 'em an' learn 'em to wuck, dat's what dey wan'. 'Sides I doan wan' 'em go to school to no Yankee school-marm — dem nigger ekality folks. My chil'ens learn to read from a leddy, that's yo'self, honey. Leastwise, dat's what I tolle one of dem Yankee teachers dat wan' little Epham to come to school."

The interview lasted some minutes, and through it all the military escort stood with head uncovered, and mouth as wide agape as any of the score of negro loungers. He knew from his four years' observation in the South that the only true sympathy and interest the black man could claim lay in the heart of the native white man and woman of that Section. Yet every demonstration like the one he was witnessing only showed to him how impossible it was for men of his breeding to comprehend it. What he now saw was a spontaneous outburst of inborn affection and not a show — there was nothing theatrical or studied about it. But he never had experienced like emotions, and while he could not understand them, he was compelled again to acknowledge their existence and sincerity.

"How different," he asked himself, "is this interest from that exercised by people of the North, who perhaps never have known in all their lives half a dozen negroes, and who never have known the relation of Master and Man? What do they know about the matter of slavery, beyond the bare, cold fact that a white man owned a black man? What do they care? What interest have they in the negro anyway, more than an abstract interest? And an abstract interest is little better than contempt. The more I see, the more I believe that ownership is but an incident, almost an accident. These people love and understand each other. Perhaps this whole business of Liberty is a mistake — in the light of this miserable alley it surely is. One thing is certain," he continued to himself, "all talk of separating the negro from

his late master is worse than folly; it would be criminal. That the negro will return to his old quarters, after we get through with this cheap show of charity, is inevitable, and it is right."

But Captain Avery was a soldier by education and profession, and never had thought of looking into the political designs that might require the slaughter of half the white men of the South. The necessities of the politicians were not then manifest, but whatever should develop, those designing and directing affairs were ready to order the adequate sacrifice. Just now it was the humiliation of the whites, and the stiltting of the blacks; and being only a soldier he had not seen that he was expected to play his part, innocently, perhaps, in this game of politics.

After Mary Lou had taken from her scant store a few pieces of small change to cheer the old slave, she turned to go away, and her escorts, both military and engineering, fell into line without orders or comment. Her mood was, as she chose to make it, reflective. Captain Avery was still wrestling with the inexplicable problem of sentiment, so that the procession moved in silence, except that Mary Lou had a word of sympathy for every negro woman she met on the way. At last he broke out: "Can you explain to me the wonderful bond of affection and confidence existing between you and that ignorant negro woman? I would give much to know how such a thing is possible. I never had it for one whom I thought so palpably my social and intellectual inferior, but in this case there is the added inferiority of race and the inborn dislike of color. What is it?"

"That comes because your heart is not right. We are told that figs do not grow on thorn bushes. Had you ever thought to study the subject by parable? But seriously, I can not explain it, although I am proud of its influence. I would make almost any sacrifice for any one of our old slaves, even now. They deserted us indecently, but they are not to blame for that. It was the work of Yankees; the first step toward what you call a higher civilization."

"But I can not command any confidence with the creatures. They seem to look upon me with suspicion," he said, with self-deprecatory frankness.

"Oh, that comes because you seek confidence without deserving it," she answered, tantalizingly. "You don't know them. Aunt Harriet has scolded me as roundly as she was scolding those children, more times than I can guess, yet I love her."

"That adds to my perplexity. Won't you give me further instruction in the matter? May I come out to Elmington for a lesson?" he asked, glad of an excuse.

"Elmington is always open to guests; but you are a hopeless pupil. You will have to experience a change of heart, I am certain, before it would be worth while to give any time to instruction."

"Ah, there is your father! Good-morning, Colonel Grayson! I hope you are well, sir."

"Very well, thank you, sir," answered Colonel Grayson, with his usual deliberation of speech. "There are few of our enemies whom

I ever expected to take pleasure in seeing again, Captain Avery, but you are one of those who left a pleasant impression after you had gone. In fact, sir, if you will pardon my frankness, we appreciated you best after you had gone, by comparing you with your successors. I am heartily glad to meet you again, sir!"

"Thank you, Colonel Grayson. I am glad you were generous enough to overlook little irregularities, and to mark the line between necessity and persecution."

"I have been a soldier, and I think I know what belongs to an honest discharge of duty. Have you invited Captain Avery to call at Elmington, Daughter?"

"He said he was coming."

"The same in effect, Captain Avery. We shall be glad to see you, sir, at your convenience or pleasure." And they drove away.

After a call on Anton Nelson, Colonel Grayson returned to the office of the Provost-Marshal and took the formidable oath of allegiance, which Captain Samson administered with much wholesome advice. Samson was of that class of persons who can not recognize the difference between character and meat. It has not yet occurred to him, if he is still living, that he was lecturing a soul so lofty, that he could not, in his highest flight of sentiment, reach it at its lowest depression.

XV

"FORTY ACRES AND A MULE"

THAT very night after Colonel Grayson had gone, Pleas slipped off as soon as it was dark and made for Kosciusko by a near cut through the fields. His determination to become a member of the League was put to early execution, and he wavered no more in the act than he had done in the plan. It was an easy matter for a negro of Pleas's standing to gain entrance in one night into all the mysteries of this benevolent and patriotic order. Numbers were sought, and the strength of membership was entirely a matter of enrollment. It could not be otherwise, for intelligence was avoided.

In most places there was a meeting once a week, but as Kosciusko was headquarters of the Freedmen's Bureau for that section, and large numbers of negroes were flocking to its paternal banner, the League was kept tolerably active to enroll and instruct the candidates. So scarce a night passed, except of a Sunday, without a round quorum in attendance and the routine of initiation and instruction being worked in all its pompous glory.

It must have been a strange sight, this assemblage of maybe a hundred black men, not half a dozen of whom could read a lesson in McGuffey's "First Reader," attempting to go through the stilted verbiage of a secret society's ritual. Yet such was the wisdom that directed the first steps of

the deluded negro toward the devious paths of citizenship. But it served a purpose. It kept him out of other mischief at a time when malicious mischief was encouraged by his instructors. The mysteries suited the superstitious nature of the African, and the less he understood, the greater the mystery and the stronger the fascination. If it was honestly intended to stimulate in him a spirit of independence toward his old master, and failed, it did the next best thing: it created a spirit of vengeance, and this could be turned to political use, which was really the end sought.

Pleas arrived early at the school-house, and had no trouble to secure the endorsement of negroes, already members, to his application. Inside of an hour he had been conducted from station to station, had taken oaths of fearful but unknown import, and was seated on a bench, a full-fledged Leaguer, listening to an edifying harangue on the then absorbing topic: "Forty Acres and a Mule." The orator was a white man who had been with the army of Thomas, and he made frequent allusion to the "dear old flag" that he had followed so faithfully, and forgot not to tell his hearers how, when he struck, the shackles fell from four million pairs of wrists. A soldier, did you ask? Oh, no, a sutler! The men who struck blows on the front line were then quietly at home, or sleeping in unmarked graves!

But such had been the genesis of the League. It was organized and manned from the first by stay-at-homes, who loved the flag and who hoped to keep it floating over their places of business, while they filled government contracts in the rear

and sent proxies to the front: It had served a political purpose, perhaps a good one. It had solidified the support of Mr. Lincoln, aiding in his re-election. This meant the prosecution of the war and the awarding of more government contracts. The second clause of the proposition created much patriotism in the order. Then, too, it had suppressed an impotent uprising or two of unorganized "Copperheads," but it never had spread with popularity amongst those who had courage to don a uniform. The soldier wants no bolted doors, no dim candle-light, no whispered oaths, no grips and knocks. An open field and a fair fight better suit the stuff of which he is made.

So the order lost no dignity in being transplanted into the sterile soil of total ignorance; and, being wholly mouthy and flatulent from inception, it had nothing substantial to impart. And more was the pity! For it spread until it had compassed the freedman. It promised him impossible and useless things, simply to hold his attention temporarily, and when he awoke he saw with his practical, unschooled wisdom, that this chanting, canting sophistry had done him no good, but had tended to widen the gulf between him and his natural and logical friend and supporter, the native white man of the South. If the thing had ever had within it the spirit of self-denial and patriotism, results might have been different; but it was conceived in greed and nurtured in selfishness, and while the original purpose of such a movement may deteriorate, it never can rise above the principle from which it springs.

The performance to which Pleas was treated, after the inexplicable ceremony of initiation had been blunderingly rehearsed, consisted of speeches interspersed with music and a sort of general catechism on political dogma. The orator of the evening had made a cheap hit by showing the freedmen how easy it was for them to get what they had been taught to think they needed, and were qualified to receive — a small farm and a mule with which to work it. "You, gentlemen, know how to work," he said, addressing the black men of his audience. "You have been brought up to work for other men, or take a flogging. Now you shall work for yourselves when you work at all, and when you don't feel like it, just turn the old mule out to bait and take a nap under your own spreading oak tree. No brutal overseer will then come along with a cat-o'-nine-tails and beat you. When will we get the land, did I hear some of you ask? The dear old flag that struck the shackles from your wrists will provide that in good time. Trust the flag. These old aristocrats owning this beautiful valley don't need all of their land. They are broke, dead broke. They have no slaves, thank God! They can't work it by themselves, they are too lazy. It will be ours, for we conquered them. We shall have an order from Congress to parcel out these lands to you, gentlemen. Just wait a few days for the orders. You can trust us, gentlemen, for we gave you liberty. Wait patiently for the order, and when it comes, strike for a home. We are your friends; those who worked and flogged you for nothing are your eternal enemies."

And he rambled on with this sentiment for an hour, evidently knowing the negro's weakness for repetitions and measured cadence of speech; until, as he lashed himself into physical excitement and became violent with gesticulation, some of the more inflammable natures responded to his eloquence with shuffling of brogans and shouts of approval: "Come down, Mars Ab'am!" "I wants a clay-bank mule, Mars Linckum!" and the like. Encouraged, he turned into his well prepared and rehearsed peroration. It was a masterly production for such an audience. He had proved its efficacy on many similar occasions. As he proceeded, the place became the real Pandemonium. Nearly all were shouting, or screaming, or groaning. Several had the power and swung their senseless heads from side to side, emitting the most diabolical yells; others rolled and tumbled, ridiculous masses on the floor. And over and above this asinine bedlam rang out the husky voice of the priest and prophet of the sutler's camp — the triumphant orator of the evening.

When, at last, his pond had run dry, and most of the negroes had hushed themselves to quiet, they filed past him and each shook his hand and warmly congratulated him on his effort. "Hit war a blessed season." "Come to 'tracted meetin' nex' month, Brudder Jimson," and other like words of encouragement were mixed with their congratulations. And a Northern gentleman in the room, who had been sent South to study the negro question, but who had never seen a negro revival, looked on all this and wrote back: "The black man is awfully in earnest about preserving

his liberty. If you had been with me to-night, and had seen the almost wild enthusiasm with which he received every allusion to the dear old flag, you would agree with me that to his crude, but sincere patriotism, must be entrusted the destinies of these Southern States. I know that there are some who maintain that political power without intelligence is a dangerous thing, but that theory, with States' Rights, is a relic of barbarism. Of course, to elevate the negro to a place, either alongside of or over the white man of the South, will be a terrific humiliation to the latter; but he has been too proud, too sensitive, too jealous of his institutions and civilization. It will be only the fulfillment of the Scriptures: 'For whoso exalteth himself shall be abased,' and so long as we fulfill a holy prophecy I am content with the work. These meetings are very annoying to the whites. They pretend to think that we teach crime. We teach no lawlessness, unless it be lawless to defend one's self and furnish one with the implements of self-defense. We must not leave these poor creatures without means of self-protection. They may use them indiscreetly, but we must take some chances, and the chances ought to favor the freedmen."

When order was again restored, the exercises took on the form of an "experience meeting," during which several negroes, nearly all preachers, bore a part. Grievances were recounted with a lively and natural flow of fancy, and passions were not allowed to slumber. If a member had suffered the indignity of being called "nigger" by some inconsiderate white man, it made

the foundation and fabric of fervid oratory. Dignity and self-esteem were much more highly extolled than decency and worth.

The songs that were interspersed as a sort of balm on these wounds, were mostly of a patriotic order, like: "Rally 'round the Flag," "Kingdom am Comin'," and "Yankee Doodle." Then came the catechism, the president of the evening asking set questions, which were answered informally by all who could think quickly enough. They ran about like this:—

President: "Who is the enemy of the colored gentleman?"

"De slave owner!" answered several. One lusty yellow negro sitting in a far corner shouted, "De Debble," as a sort of after-thought, and another allowed that it was "Evil sperets."

"The late slave owner," is the right answer," said the president.

"De Sun'ay School teacher say de Debble," persisted the man in the corner.

President: "Who liberated the colored man from the barbarity of slavery?"

"Mars Ab'am Linckum," cried several in unison! "De 'publican party," said others, and the Sunday School member, evidently becoming confused over the word "barbarity," and anxious to show his knowledge, shouted "Barabbas."

"The Republican party," is the correct answer," said the wise man.

President: "What do we demand for the colored man?"

"Fo'ty acres an' a mule!" came in a deafening shout..

"‘Equal rights with his white brothers,’ is the proper answer,” said Wisdom.

Half a dozen demanded: “What’s dat?” while the man of Sunday School lore cut in: “My brudders is all black.”

President: “Who is your master?”

“Mars Linckum,” was the general reply, regardless of the fact that President Lincoln had been dead two months; but a voice, sepulchral with reverence, gave out from the corner, “Gawd.”

And Wisdom again reproved Righteousness: “You have no master! Each of you is his own master!”

And this was continued for half an hour, the questions equally silly, the answers dogmatic and pathetic in ridiculousness. If the black men had been honestly and sensibly instructed, what good might have resulted!

While this was in progress, the speaker of the evening became a-hungered for new honors, and thought to add fresh laurels to his spurious diadem by introducing an original song.

When the time seemed opportune, he arose, and hushing the buzz and clatter with a wave of his hand, announced that he had written words for a song to the air of “Dixie.” “I suppose you all can sing ‘Dixie’?” he enquired. “Yas, suh, Brudder Jimson,” came the answer from every part of the room.

“Then I will line off the first stanza to you, as your preachers do in meeting:—

‘Oh, forty acres and a mule to plow,
A two-room cabin and a brindle cow.’”

He waved his hands like a singing master to start them off. They started, and with more gusto than they had put into any of the other songs of the evening. But alas for the poet! The mention of Dixie had gone clean through the rubbish of Union League patriotism, and had struck their hearts. Only a few started to sing the words lined off; nearly every voice came out from the first, full and strong: "Oh, 'way down South in de lan' ob cotton."

He shouted for silence. The president of the evening tried to rescue the poet and his verses, hammering loudly with his gavel, but nothing could stop the song. Again they were in the cotton and corn fields, singing as they worked; or on a holiday in the wood, cooking for a great barbecue, over pits in the ground; or under the master's window giving a serenade. Their shelf-worn patriotism was all gone, and they sang the old song through from first to last, with chorus repeated after each verse. They wept for the good old days, they shook each other by the hand, and when it was finished they were silent in meditation. But they did not shout nor get the power. Their hearts, not their passions, had been moved.

After this return to total depravity, the leaders were taken with a panic for adjournment, and the ritual for closing the meeting was abbreviated to a degree. The inner circle remained for consultation, the others went silently and thoughtfully away.

The next morning, Pleas recounted to his young master his experiences at the meeting, reserving only such portions of the events as were unimportant, to save his obligations.

XVI

A MAN WITHOUT A COUNTRY

ABOUT this time there was bitter activity in the County Guards at Kosciusko. Not a day was allowed to pass without its full record of persecution and humiliation. Some unfortunate, struggling weak-handed and alone to breast the devastating tide that had overwhelmed his home, was seized by cowardly hands and torn from his desperate task to answer a frivolous charge before the Provost-Marshal, or his honor, N. Lex Witan, Magistrate. The maintenance of peace and order was the special charge of the Federal troops, but Captain Brewster, a good officer in action, had become too indolent in camp to study the shaping of events, and showed little concern so long as his men did not participate in the countless incidents intended to create disorder. He took not the trouble to interfere with the Guards in the practice of its craft, for the manufacture of offense had become its sole occupation.

And there was apparent reason for all this malevolent activity, when one was familiar with the internal workings of affairs. The general office of Provost-Marshal had outlived already the term for which it was created, and unless it made a show of utility the Federal authorities would hardly renew its tenure, and the horde of deputies would be thrown back upon the tender mercies of the world, to make a living like other and better

men. The Freedmen's Bureau was called into being as a temporary measure following emancipation, and if the white man of the South were to accept the situation now before him and provide employment for his late slaves without a clash of interest, then the occupation of the agents was gone. Here lay the interests of two strong classes of politicians wholly dependent upon the abuse of power for a continuance of official life, with all the corrupt gains they had contrived to make. And these stealings were enormous, and were increasing daily. The strife must be maintained! In this extremity the County Guards had been indispensable, for, by the logic of its creation and by the character of its personnel, it could be used only as a tool.

But Captain Avery, on taking command of the company a few days before, had gone studiously into the condition of things, and the questions he had put to the officers of the Guards, the Provost-Marshal, and the agent and lackeys about the Freedmen's Bureau gave little promise of continuance to the system of abuses then in vogue. True, he had not yet interfered, but an eruption was daily expected from him, and they all feared it, for he was the ranking officer, and he was known to be a determined and purposeful man.

The voluntary appearance of Colonel Grayson to take the oath of allegiance had disappointed the Guards of one victim on whom it had counted, since Felix Grayson had reported his name some days before. But Major Lewis remained unreconstructed, and to all appearances, politically unregenerate. A member of the late Confederate

Congress, a man of aristocratic birth and tendencies, a man of known wealth, had not sworn to support the Government! Here was a shining mark! Captain Jonas Smith called his troop together in solemn council. It never would do for the whole body to march out with swords and staves to take one man. For once they recognized the quality of shame. So it was arranged that lots should be cast for good men and true, out of their number, to make the arrest. Straws were drawn, and six short stems decided the fate of as many brave men to participate in the event next day.

But such another epidemic of disease had not been witnessed in Williams County since the conscript officers were last there, and the next morning not a man of the six was able to come to scratch. Major Lewis was known to have maintained his honor on two occasions upon the bluff overlooking the Opal, a famous dueling ground, and it was a matter of local rumor that at both these events he gave his antagonist the choice of position. He never had been heard to mention these little matters, but of his courage no one who knew him had a doubt. And hid away in the stately old mansion at Fairfax was a brace of dueling pistols, the memory of which struck terror and disease to the very heart and vitals of the Guards.

While Captain Jonas Smith and the survivors of his clan were considering their dilemma, Major Lewis rode into Kosciusko and began a diligent enquiry for the office of the Provost-Marshal. The sheriff early discovered his intended victim, and

hastening out offered to introduce him to Captain Samson.

"No, I thank you, Smith, I am not too bashful to introduce myself. If you will direct me to the office of his majesty, I will be duly thankful."

"Cert'ly, Major, cert'ly, up here in the Bosworth house. I 'll show yo' the way." And he took the lead, hoping thereby to get credit for having brought the Major in. But at the front door Major Lewis quickly dismounted, and throwing the rein to Smith, said: "Hold my horse, please, while I attend to this business. I hope not to detain you long." And he went into the house to face Federal authority.

The Provost-Marshal, acting on the custom of his kind, had taken for a business desk a handsome table. This occupied a position in the centre of the back parlor, so that each person who came in, either on business or for gossip, added to the increasing defilement of the elegant furnishings of the rooms.

As Major Lewis entered, the officer sat with chair tilted back and showed a clean pair of number eleven army brogans on the dainty finish of his writing table. Half a dozen men in old army uniforms, perhaps the very men who were selected by a cruel fate to make the arrest, but now fully recovered from their late indisposition, lounged about the rooms, smoking that vile mixture of vegetable offal known to commerce as "sutler's tobacco." They evidently expected the humiliation of the Major, and if they were afraid to participate in his arrest, they could lend to its climax the dignity and grace of their presence.

The Major walked into the room with perfect unconcern, bowing as he entered, and without a look at any one in particular, said: "I wish you all good-morning!" He then stepped up to the desk on which slumbered the army shoes, gave the wearer a scrutinizing look, and enquired: "This is Colonel Samson, Deputy Provost-Marshal, I reckon?"

"Yes, that's my name, Provost-Marshal for this district. Yes, what can I do for you?" He expected Major Lewis with an escort of County Guards. That this delicate looking man, entirely unattended, should be the victim had not crossed his calculation.

"My name, sir, is Lewis, Walker Lewis, of the 6th Civil District, this County. I am here, sir, of my own free will and accord to confer with you, as the representative of the Federal Government, on the matter of taking the oath of allegiance." There was a scraping of heavy shoes over the polished surface of the table, and official dignity inhabited the countenance and attitude of the Marshal in an instant.

"Oh, yes, yes. You're Major Lewis, glad to meet you, Major. Yes, yes, you're at the right place. Will you take the oath at once? If so, hold up your right hand, Major," and the eager officer put himself in posture to administer.

"You evidently did not understand me, sir. I say I am here to confer with you regarding the taking of this oath. There are some matters bearing upon the act and its obligations, about which I desire information," said the Major, with unusual deliberation.

"Oh, it's only a little matter of formality, required by the Government; a kind of renouncing allegiance to the late Confederacy, and renewing it to the old flag," explained Captain Samson.

"Is that all there is to it, Colonel?"

"That is all, Major Lewis," said the officer.

"Then there is no occasion for me to be here. I owe no allegiance to a Confederacy, for there is no Confederacy. That capitulated three months ago, and is now a fact in history only. I beg pardon for having troubled you on a matter of no importance." And the Major started to leave the room.

"But, Major Lewis, while, as I said in the first place, this taking of the oath is a matter of formality, it is nevertheless one that the Government requires," said the Provost-Marshal, by way of stopping the retreat of the Major.

"How does the Government require it? By statute law?"

"By special Act of Congress, sir. My instructions are to see that every Rebel in this district is brought to acknowledge allegiance to the Federal Government. That is what I am here for, and that is what I sent after you for," said the Marshal, with rising warmth.

"You sent after me?"

"Yes."

"When, may I ask?"

"This morning, sir!"

"Now, Colonel Samson, we may as well come to an understanding early as to go into a long and fruitless controversy. First, I am here of my own free will and act. I was not informed that

you had sent for me. I do not recognize your authority to send for me as you would send out after one of your lackeys." Here the Major indicated by a wave of his hand the row of Guards sitting about the room. "Second, I am advised of all the acts of Congress up to the first of the present month, and if there is one such as you have mentioned, I will trouble you for a reference to it, or to show it to me. Third, I will be obliged to you if you will show me instructions from officers in authority, of the kind you have just now indicated, requiring you to bring all Rebels, as you choose to call us, back to allegiance by way of an oath that you alone have power to administer. And, last of all, as I have already intimated, when the government at Richmond collapsed, my allegiance returned, *ipso facto*, and without operation of any functional virtue delegated to you, unto the parent government, that of the United States of America."

"Then do I understand that you refuse to take the oath? Do you still stand defiant to the laws and dignity of the United States?" asked the Marshal, wroth that his much vaunted authority should be ignored.

"I did not refuse, sir, I simply asked for definite knowledge of your powers and instructions," said the Major, with tantalizing indifference.

"But does this quibbling amount to a refusal?" persisted the Marshal.

"If you will pardon a personal remark," said the Major, "I will say that the Deputy Provost-Marshal for this district seems to be more con-

cerned about his own official dignity, than about the laws that create his office, and define his powers. I have not quibbled; I have not refused. I have questioned your jurisdiction, and you are bound to establish it or drop the matter entirely."

"But the question is: Will you take the oath or will you not?" thundered the Marshal in a rage, as he pounded the table before him.

Major Lewis would have become very angry in all probability, at the pompous vanity of the officer, had not the latter lost his temper so early in the controversy. As it was, he pursued the course of calm, conscious superiority, against which bluster always rails to its own discredit. Before answering the last question he moved deliberately to the back of the table, looked the Marshal squarely in the face, and seemed to grow tall and powerful as he said:—

"I have neither consented nor refused, do not mistake nor misquote me, sir. I have simply asked for such information as one must have to act understandingly. Instead of giving me this, you swell yourself out with official importance and pound this table. Such arguments sometimes fail; this is one of the times. When you are prepared to treat with me intelligently, I shall be glad to meet you; but I can not be coerced into doing that which I do not understand. I may take the oath of allegiance; I may not do so. It all depends on a fair and reasonable construction of the laws of the land. I wish you good-morning, sir." And the Major turned and walked from the room.

Stepping out of the front door upon the veranda, he collided with an officer who stood talking with Jonas Smith.

"I beg your pardon, sir. The interview I have had right now left me somewhat pre-occupied, and I did not mind your presence."

"No harm done, sir, nor apology necessary. This is Major Lewis, I believe?"

"Yes, sir, my name is Lewis."

"My name is Avery, Major Lewis, commanding Company K, stationed here at Kosciusko. I was encamped at Elmington nearly two years ago, and while there I heard Colonel Grayson speak of you often, and very highly," said the Captain.

"Ah, Captain Avery, allow me to say that I am happy to make your acquaintance. Colonel Grayson has mentioned your name to me many times. I was from home at the time you speak of."

"In attendance upon a session of your Congress, I believe."

While this introductory conversation was being conducted upon the veranda, there was great turmoil within the house. The Provost-Marshal was so thoroughly stunned and angered by the Major's defiance, that he did not recover the use of his senses and authority until the latter was well out of the house. In his rage he stamped on the floor and shouted to the men sitting about: "Arrest him, Guards! Bring him back, and I will make him take the oath, or, damn him, we'll kill him. Shall we be over-run by these aristocratic vermin? Bring him back, I tell

you!" And he continued in this strain, but awakened no movement in response.

"Won't you step into the house with me, Major Lewis? I want to make a little investigation of this case," said Captain Avery, with a frankness of countenance that gave confidence.

"With the greatest of pleasure, Captain Avery, inasmuch as you request it. For myself, one interview is enough; I settled all my matters before coming out."

"What is the meaning of all this uproar, Captain Samson?" asked Avery.

"Oh, Major Lewis comes in here and quibbles about taking the oath of allegiance, and finally questions my authority to administer ——"

"Stop there, sir! In the presence of all these witnesses, you lie," said the Major with perfect composure, but with force that set Samson to quaking. The Marshal turned white, then purple in the face, under Major Lewis's piercing eye, but made no move to answer the insult. He would have spoken, but Captain Avery motioned for silence.

"When I asked you to come in here, Major Lewis, it was not to investigate you, but the workings of this office. To that end, will you have the kindness to state this matter to me as fully as you care to? You shall not be interrupted," said Avery.

"It is mighty near this way: I came to Kosciusko this morning to see about taking the oath of allegiance, and before taking it I made some enquiries, such as I thought a prudent man ought to make, but I could get no satisfactory informa-

tion. I asked to be shown the act by virtue of which the oath is administered, and was answered with loud words, entirely foreign to the subject, and tremendous pounding on this table. Not satisfied with that kind of instruction in the way I should go, and despairing of getting any better, I walked out upon the porch, intending to ride home, when I met you. That is about all there is to it."

"Did you come voluntarily, Major Lewis?" asked Captain Avery.

"Entirely so, sir," answered the Major.

Samson started to speak, but Avery looked at him sternly and said: "One thing at a time, Captain Samson. We will reach your side of the case in a moment. I propose to take this thing in its order. One of you men go out and hold that horse, and tell Captain Smith to come in here."

Smith entered, looking very foolish.

"Did you not tell me just now that you brought Major Lewis in under arrest to take the oath of allegiance?" asked Avery of Jonas.

"I doan remember jest what I tol' yo', Cap'n. We hed o'ders to arrest him, but the men took sick las' night. As I said afo', I doan remember what I said. But I was goin' out to ask him to come in, when I seen him ride into town," said Smith, with some confusion.

"You told me, very boastfully, not more than five minutes ago, that you went out to Fairfax, arrested Major Lewis and brought him in. Did you not tell me so?"

"I reckons I did, Cap'n."

"Did you arrest him, or did you not?" demanded Avery, fiercely.

"He come to town hisself. I come up here with him," said Smith, with an air of triumph.

"And held his horse at the door," put in Captain Avery. "Well, go back and finish your job, but don't leave the premises until I see you again." Smith started out, but Avery called: "Stop, one thing more. By whose orders were you to arrest Major Lewis, if you got courage enough?"

"On Cap'n Samson's o'ders, of co'se," he answered, and then hurried out of doors.

Turning to Captain Samson, he asked: "Are you issuing orders for the arrest of people, to compel them to take the oath of allegiance?"

"I have in some cases."

"What kind of orders, written or oral?"

"Oral, I ____"

"Answer my questions, please. By what authority do you arrest people?"

"By Act of Congress," he answered, with great assurance.

"Show me the Act."

The Provost-Marshals hunted and rummaged about in his books and papers for some minutes, and finally said: "I don't seem to find the section, but I have authority."

"Don't you know that the oath of allegiance is simply a privilege extended to late confederates by proclamation of President Johnson? It is not compulsory. If they want to renew their relations with the Federal Government, it can be done by the oath, but there is no law requiring them to

take it. Every effort on your part to force it upon them is flagrant abuse of power. I suspect there is too much abuse of authority being practiced here now, and I mean to make it my occupation for a time to stop it."

"You have asked Captain Samson practically the same questions that I did only a few moments ago, and you have obtained for me the information that I sought in vain to get." Then turning to Samson the Major continued: "For the present, Mr. Deputy Provost-Marshal, I shall not take the oath of allegiance."

"Then you are not a citizen of the United States of America," put in Samson, as a parting shot.

"By my own choice, not by virtue of your decree," said Major Lewis. "If all the representatives of the Government were like you, Captain Avery, I would travel a long way to take this oath, and thus become identified with its citizens. But as the other party seems to predominate, I shall choose, for a time, to remain a man without a country. Allow me to say again, that I am very glad to know you, Captain Avery, and I hope to have the pleasure of entertaining you at Fairfax soon, at your convenience."

"Thank you, Major Lewis, I shall call on you very soon."

"I wish you good-morning, Captain Samson; good-bye, for the present, Captain Avery." And Major Lewis walked out.

"Tell Captain Smith to come into the house, and you sitters, step out," said Avery, to the loungers about the room.

The exact words that passed at this triangular interview between the captains, will never find record in this or any other authentic history. Captain Avery, the only one present capable of giving an honest version, was too modest to report a matter in which he took the part of task-master; but results followed that proved it to have been decisive, and caused the impression to spread that unless the plotters devised new schemes, their services in that community would be needed no more. One probable effect was manifest in the forthwith setting out by Captain Samson, to hunt new quarters for his office among the deserted store buildings of Kosciusko.

But Captain Avery did not rest with this reckoning. No sooner was it over than he betook himself to the headquarters of the Freedmen's Bureau, where he finished the good work while he had it well in hand. There followed a short and happy season of quiet, during which the vocations of peace were pursued with little interruption.

XVII

SHOWS AGAIN THAT PEACE HATH HER VICTORIES

CAPTAIN AVERY followed the work of re-adjusting the civil and military methods at Kosciusko by taking a hand at domestic reconstruction. No sooner was the office of the Provost-Marshal removed to quarters more suitable to its dignity and condition, than he supervised scrubbing and airing the Bosworth house into a state of tolerable inhabitance. This done, he started out to find the rightful possessors, and with the aid of Anton Nelson and other reputable Unionists, introduced Mrs. Bosworth and daughter to the occupation of their own home.

This last proceeding was attended with such profuse thanks from Mrs. Bosworth and her daughter, Miss Betty, as well as a kindly word from nearly every person of apparent respectability whom he met, that Captain Avery felt at once that he moved in a different atmosphere. It seemed to open the door for his possible entry into a social circle heretofore closed and barred against him as the representative of a common enemy, (not a conqueror in battles, but one that was assailing their institutions and local customs) — an enemy that sought to make the South cosmopolitan, when she preferred to retain her own and old social and economic systems, subject only to such changes as were made necessary by the new order of things. And these changes,

the Southerners themselves wanted to make, and not have them injected by persons who could not respect their likes and dislikes. He seemed to have stepped out of this list, and was well received not only by Mrs. Bosworth and her daughter, but by all their circle of friends.

Encouraged by this suddenly acquired social popularity, Captain Avery thought to push his acquaintance with Colonel Grayson's family, and rode out to Elmington the next evening after his triumph. He found Pleas in charge, and asked if Colonel Grayson was at home.

"Naw, suh. He been 'way fo' 'bout week," answered Pleas.

"Is Captain Grayson at home?"

"Naw, suh, not right now."

"Is Miss Mary Lou at home, then?" persisted the Captain.

"Naw, suh. She 'way with Cunnel Grayson. Now what yo' ask dat fo'? What yo' sojers wants?" asked Pleas, who feared more trouble was brewing for his master.

"Oh, nothing in particular. They are friends of mine and I simply called to pay my respects," answered the Captain, somewhat amused by the interest displayed by a negro servant. "Do you know when Colonel Grayson and Miss Mary Lou will return?" he continued.

"Naw, suh, I doan know. 'Sides, I doan reckon we has friends with Yankee sojers."

"Please say to Captain Grayson that Captain Avery called to pay a friendly visit to Colonel Grayson and his family," said Avery, as he rode away.

"Yas, suh, I tells him."

But Captain Avery was not the person to be dismayed into ostracism, even on the decree of so great a functionary as Pleas, and it came convenient for him to ride past Elmington the next evening. This time he was more fortunate, for he made the acquaintance of Howard. From him he learned the nature of the business that had carried Colonel Grayson and Miss Mary Lou from home; further, that Miss Margaret had already brightened up, but was still very weak and ill, and that all hands would return on the second day following.

The Captain had spent much thought during the last few days and nights, in the vain effort to devise a plea that would justify an early second call upon the Graysons. His general invitation from the Colonel would carry him there properly, as soon as they were at home; but how should he give color to a second visit before the reasonable delay required of a formal acquaintance, for he could not persuade himself that he might claim to be more than that. He had resolved long before, that if either the fortunes of war or any influence he might be able to command should place him within reach of Elmington, he would press this acquaintance with all fitting decorum, hoping to dislodge from the mind or fancy of Miss Mary Lou her dislike for Yankee soldiers, or for one, at least. But luck had been more favorable than he had hoped, and he found himself located at the nearest military post, in the most advantageous position possible, and all without the exercise of political or military influence. Had he been less

a materialist he might have regarded the whole string of events as predestined, especially as he was the possible beneficiary — for without the aid of direct profit, we can seldom pierce the nebula surrounding foreordination and distinguish it from luck.

And now, to fill his cup to overflowing, here was his excuse—an excuse that approached a duty—for he must make frequent calls to enquire after the health of the invalid, and perhaps he might be of service. Accordingly he rode up the avenue at Elmington on the evening of the day appointed for the traveler's return. He saw Mary Lou for a moment only, as her patient required constant attention, but he made good use of the time.

"Please command me, if there is anything I can do for your friend," he said, after a few questions about herself and her trip.

"There is nothing, absolutely nothing, I fear. It is very kind of you to offer, that is, very kind for a Yankee," she answered, not forgetting her banter.

He acknowledged the qualification by an unconscious twitch about the corners of his mouth.

"But how about your physician? Are you entirely satisfied with him?" he continued.

"I am not, Captain Avery, but Mr. Dodge seems to have confidence in our old neighborhood physician, Doctor Anderson. He is an excellent man, and a good doctor for ordinary cases, but Margaret is so nervous—it is pitiful to see her at times."

"With your permission I will speak to your

brother about this, and after he has talked with Mr. Dodge perhaps I can be of service in this particular. I should like to do something."

"You are very kind, Captain Avery—with the usual qualification. But I must go back to Margaret, and there comes Howard to entertain you, so let me wish you good-evening." And she disappeared in the house.

He called the next evening, and again the evening following that, and saw Colonel Grayson and Howard each time, but Mary Lou sent excuses. The third evening he brought a bouquet of garden flowers, contributed by Anton Nelson, which he gave to Howard to be sent to the sick-room. On this occasion he was introduced to Mr. Dodge, and suggested to him the matter of a consultation of doctors.

"I am pretty well satisfied with Doctor Anderson," said Dodge, in his full, loud voice. "When I was up North for my health, I met no such doctors as he is, none so careful and steady; a little slow for me, for I am a hustler, myself, but he is very careful. I like a hustler, Captain, whether in business or war or medicine; but a careful man is the next best. Who were you going to suggest?"

"I will take pleasure in sending to Nashville for one of the most skillful physicians in the service, and will have him down on the afternoon train to-morrow. I can bring him out from Kosciusko at about this hour," said Avery.

"You are very kind, Captain, very kind. You must be a Southern man, Captain, judging from this act of splendid courtesy. That is the way we

do down here, try to help each other. I have just brought down a carload of the finest horses that ever looked through a collar, to help this section out; for said I to myself: ‘The war has taken all the decent horse stock out of Middle Tennessee, and we must have good horses.’ But what will it cost to bring this doctor out from the city? You see I have been up into your country for my health and have learned to ask the price of things in advance — have to do it up there, you know.”

“It will cost you nothing, Mr. Dodge. These surgeons attached to the Federal army, are paid salaries and have little to do now, and are always glad to be of service,” answered Avery, somewhat perplexed with the peculiarities of Mr. Dodge.

“Well, bring him along, Captain, and many thanks to you,” said Dodge, with perceptible relief in the matter of fees. “I will arrange with Doctor Anderson for the consultation. He may object to meeting a Yankee army surgeon, but I can smooth that down. Leave that to me.”

“We certainly are under great obligations to you, Captain Avery, for this generous proposal,” Howard put in, as soon as Dodge stopped to catch his breath. “There will be no trouble between the doctors, Mr. Dodge, for Doctor Anderson was an army surgeon, and soldiers don’t quarrel.”

“Let me put you entirely at ease on the score of obligation, gentlemen,” said Avery. “I feel a great interest in — in — extending to this household every possible courtesy. There was a time when Colonel Grayson had reason to think that

the army with which I served did him great wrong,— my command helped to scatter the destruction that we see on every hand, although I did my best to prevent it; but that grand man took it like a soldier— as one of the exigencies of war. He taught me a lesson in fortitude that was left out of the course at West Point, and I admire him, next to General Thomas, above any gentleman I ever knew.”

“ Father is proud to hold the second place to General Thomas in any gentleman’s good opinion,” Howard hastened to say, before Dodge should get started. “ He loves George H. Thomas as much as any man living, although the General did desert the South when we thought he ought to have stayed.”

“ Yes, yes, it is very kind of you to feel as you do toward us — not look upon each of us as a personal enemy,” said Dodge, bound to talk, although somewhat confused in ideas. “ If it had not been that my health failed, I should have been your enemy in the field, and then the fortunes of war in the division of the Cumberland might have been different. I was on the point of raising a regiment when my health broke on me, and I had to go away, or die of biliousness.”

Mary Lou came out and thanked the Captain for the flowers, and then spoiled everything by asking him to thank Mr. Nelson for them. “ Margaret was delighted that Mr. Nelson remembered her, and that a Yankee soldier should have been the messenger,” she said. “ She has more charity for you-all than I have. She nursed several Yankees in our hospitals, for we always did

the best we could by our enemies, and she says that some of them are really nice men, except in politics."

"I see you are careful to make your friend responsible for such an admission. Won't you concede as much on your own account?" asked Avery.

"I never knew any of your sick," she answered. "From what Margaret says, you-all seem to improve under affliction." And with this parting shot she returned to the house.

The next evening he drove out with Mr. Nelson's horse and barouche, bringing the wise man from Nashville, and waited through that tedious amalgamation of assumption, known to the world as a "consultation of doctors." After that he became a daily caller, usually bringing flowers or dainties intended to cheer the patient, and at the same time assuage the supposed enmity of Mary Lou. On these visits he always met some of the people of the neighborhood, who seemed never to tire of offering services and bringing to the sick such delicacies as they had. This was another revelation to him, for the amenities of life seemed to supplant the very struggle for subsistence that he knew was desperate with every one of them.

From all these people Avery received the highest courtesy, not such as often is accorded to one in command, but such as is the due from one of gentle nature and good breeding to another in kind. It was tribute to personal qualities, not truckling to rank and station.

Several times he met the Reverend Felix Gray-

son at the Colonel's house, and marked that he tried to pay uncommon court to Mary Lou, but as the Captain did not then understand that no blood relationship existed between the two, he gave the young preacher credit for great gallantry. He often saw the Rev. Felix driving out of Kosciusko with a teacher from the negro school, Miss Edgerton, a misguided enthusiast from Ohio, and on one occasion met them at Elmington. Even Miss Edgerton was courteously received at this hospitable house, despite the universal commiseration felt and expressed for the morbid gullibility that carried her kind to the South on an impossible undertaking.

The unrelieved nursing of two weeks was now beginning to leave worn traces on the face of Mary Lou. Colonel Grayson and Howard often spoke of it with deep concern, and Avery fell to studying means for getting her air and exercise. And it so happened at this time that Miss Betty Bosworth expressed a desire to see Miss Margaret, who now was somewhat recovered and began to receive her old friends.

"I would gladly take you out to Elmington," said Avery, "if I had the conveyance. On the strength of your wish I will invite you to go, but you must exercise your woman's ingenuity to suggest the ways and means."

"Easy enough! You have horses in camp, and I have an old saddle in the attic."

"Good, so far! But our horses are not broken to a woman's habit."

"Your horse surely is gentle, and the lieutenant's will carry you," she suggested.

"Good, again! Well, this evening at six, we are off for the first ride. Really, I have missed a dozen pleasant rides for the need of a little invention. I have wanted to invite you to go out there these two weeks, and I have known that you wished to go—but a man can't think. Men are stupid beasts."

When they arrived at Elmington, Miss Betty went direct to the sick-room, leaving Mary Lou to entertain the Captain.

"Now, Miss Grayson, suppose you get into Miss Bosworth's saddle for a little canter. It will do you a world of good," he said.

"I would love to ride again. It has been an age since I sat a horse. You Yankees spoiled that sport for me."

"And I am here to do my very best to make amends, if for a few minutes only. Do take a little ride," he persisted.

"Will you wait for me to make a change of habit, and not become impatient? You Yankees are always in such haste."

"I will wait with pleasure and real Southern patience. All Yankees are not impatient. Thousands of us are absolutely lazy."

The ease with which Mary Lou sat her mount doubled the Captain's admiration for her. He was in tortures lest this should be the only ride, for he had come to dread what he thought was her spiteful caprice. But to his infinite delight she declared the change had refreshed her, and gladly accepted his invitation to repeat the ride on the following evening. And so it went on for days, Miss Betty going out to care for Margaret,

while Mary Lou took the air on horseback; not always at a canter, sometimes at full speed, until Avery was alarmed at the daring with which she put his horse to the whip.

Through all these rides her manner was assumedly frank and outspoken, only it never lost the air of banter. No compliment or flattery could draw her even for a moment into a change of demeanor. One evening the Captain had occasion to speak of the fortitude of the Southern soldier, when he turned suddenly and said: "The truest heroes of the South were women."

"I don't know any of them, unless you mean Margaret," she answered, with all seriousness.

"One good example," he replied, "but I know of others. Your brother was a good soldier. I know the stuff a good soldier is made from, and he has it, but he has not half the courage of his sister. Please don't interrupt!" he said, raising his hand in mock threat. "He has said that to me repeatedly, and has told me of a dozen instances to prove it."

"You do Howard an injustice in that speech, eloquent as it was intended to be; besides, you are an unpardonable flatterer. If I possessed all the bravery you would make me believe, you never would dare to flatter me so outrageously. You know that true heroism resents false praise, and that it is terrible in resentment. Have you heard the new word Mr. Dodge brought back from the North? No? Well, it's 'taffy'; not a nice word, is it?"

"But I insist that I shall not be driven from my position by ridicule. No hero ever lived but

would declare that his bravest deed was only a commonplace, natural act," he persisted.

"How red that sunset is! Are you a weather-prophet, Captain Avery? Shall we have no more rain this summer? Poor Howard! He has worked so hard on his garden, and already it looks like a desert. Don't you think it requires great fortitude to withstand a drought and an invasion of Yankees the same year?" she said, by way of turning the conversation.

"Heroes, not weather, are my specialty," answered the Captain. "My taste and education are military, not meteorological, and I think I understand my subject better than your substitute. I would love to give Mr. Howard a little hope for his crop, but I can tell him that no matter how the weather is, the Grayson family has fortitude for any calamity. Shall we ride down to the forks of the road before turning in?"

"Not if you insist on discussing a subject on which you are so helplessly ignorant. I will turn flatterer, with your permission," she said, with assumed gravity, "and say that you speak quite entertainingly, on subjects you understand. Shall we talk about the weather, or go home?"

"I yield to the weather, and a more heroic will than my own," he said, completely vanquished.

And in this Avery spoke more truth than he knew, for Mary Lou Grayson at that time not only nursed and cared for her sick friend, but attended to all the domestic duties in the Grayson household. She cooked the meals, washed the dishes, swept and scrubbed. Aunt Manda was

to help, or rather to do the meanest of the work, but she was too old and rheumatic to be of actual service, and Mary Lou could not command the heart to drive her to work.

With these occupations the summer advanced. The victories of peace were manifest on every side. The returned soldier was too busy with his disorganized affairs to give much thought to the shaping of political events. He wanted peace and quiet, and these he had in wholesome plenty after Avery had reformed the methods of the Federal authorities at Kosciusko. Few were heard to complain; even the most apprehensive took on an air of hopeful expectation. There was no clashing of interests. Everything was quiet. Even the undercurrent of trouble that was being fermented by the County Guards and hangers-on at the Freedmen's Bureau ran so quietly that the white men of the South failed to discover it until the time of inception was well passed. There was little joy, but there was abundant satisfaction. There was little comfort, but the murky clouds of gloom were breaking and the glorious sunshine of hope began to pour in.

XVIII

IN WHICH TROUBLE THREATENS

THE sweet monotony of peace was soon interrupted by an order from the War Department directing that a search be made of all houses of late Confederates for fire-arms and other evidences of sedition. Captain Avery had been in daily contact with the people of his district for more than a month, and knew full well the folly of such instructions; but his orders gave him no discretion. He was an honest soldier and would not show favors with the hope of making friends, so he decided on a sudden descent without notice to any one. The district was divided into sections, and his men into squads to match; but yet more were needed to accomplish the edict in one day. Accordingly, the County Guards and men about the Freedmen's Bureau were impressed into the service.

As soon as Felix Grayson was asked to join one of the squads, he suggested that he be given command of a small detachment and assigned to Elmington and the houses in that immediate vicinity.

"I should like to be present at my brother's and see that no unnecessary indignity is offered him, and that no uproar is made in the house. It would be inhuman to disturb Miss Dodge in her illness," he said.

"Very well, Grayson, only there shall be no

favoritism beyond that," said Avery. "I will do Colonel Grayson any favor that does not conflict with an impartial discharge of duty. Make the search thorough, but don't disturb Miss Dodge."

"As you say, Captain, there shall be no neglect of duty, although it will hurt me beyond measure to see my proud brother and his proud family humiliated," answered Felix, with apparent feeling. "You shall say to me, on receipt of my report of to-morrow's work: 'Well done, good and faithful servant.' I would like Jonas Smith in my company, Captain, if you have no other disposition to make of him."

"That suggestion helps me out of a mess, for I have not known what to do with him," said Avery. "I could not trust him to command a squad, and his position as Captain of the Guards makes it awkward for me to ask him to go under a private or noncommissioned officer. But he will go with you cheerfully, and you can see that he does no mischief."

Accordingly, Felix, Jonas Smith and two others set off the following morning to execute their orders. They stopped first at the house of Mr. Dodge and were going through the form of search, but this gentleman declared with much vehemence that he had been a Union man from the first. "I am no Rebel, gentlemen, not John Dodge! I went up North to get away from the blamed conscript officers."

"Then yo' an' me is podners, Colonel Dodge. I allus toted fair with the Union; allus, suh," said Jonas, with a familiarity that was not altogether pleasing to Mr. Dodge. But the stop at

Saunders' Lodge, (for so Mr. Dodge had christened the homestead after the death of Mr. Saunders) gave the party the information that Colonel Grayson and Howard were both from home, which was especially welcome to Felix.

Pleas announced the officers to Mary Lou, and on her appearance the Reverend Felix, with much show of interest, explained the nature of the visitation.

"It's only a matter of form, Mary Lou," he said, "but I very much regret that brother and Howard are both from home. It will take only a minute, and I will vouch that Miss Dodge is not disturbed. I hope she is improving under your excellent care?"

"I think she improves slowly, but not because of my attentions. I know nothing of nursing, and deserve no credit for her recovery." She spoke this in an abstracted manner, as if her mind was still on the business in hand. "Can not this be put off until either father or Howard returns?" she continued.

"Our instructions are very explicit and imperative. I have no choice to exercise; but for that matter, unless you tell them on their return, they never will know it. Nothing will be disturbed. I will have Smith go through the form, and then we will go on. Or, if you prefer, I will make the search while Smith stays here in the hall. Yes, that is better. You show me through the house, so that I will not disturb Miss Dodge."

So Felix went to the second floor, and looked from room to room in all places where fire-arms would not have been concealed, had there been

such things on the premises. He was very quiet, did not go near the sick room, and tried to impress Mary Lou with his utter indifference to the spirit of his instructions. As he came down to the first floor he called out to Smith who was already in the carriage: "Have you made a thorough search, Captain Smith?"

"Yas, suh, Parson; looked behin' err do' an' foun' nerr a gun," answered Smith, with a chuckle.

"Well, you drive on, and don't wait for me. This is all we have for you to do to-day."

No implements of war were found, save the old sword of Casa de Mata, which was left undisturbed in its sheath; but by special instructions, Jonas Smith carried out of the mansion at Elmington a grain-sack full of papers, the entire contents of Colonel Grayson's old writing desk. These comprised title papers, business memoranda, personal letters,—some from his father, others from his wife. All were ruthlessly dumped into the bag and carried out to the carriage, while Felix was in the upper part of the house and Mary Lou was with her patient.

That night in the privacy of his room, Felix Grayson went over them carefully; and, after abstracting one file that he thought would serve a purpose in the future, he hurled them back into the sack and returned them to Colonel Grayson early the next morning.

"I didn't know what the creature had done," Felix said to his brother, with great humility, "until late last night. He said our orders covered papers of a seditious nature, and that your desk with its bulging contents looked suspicious.

I found him looking them over and took them from him. Here they are all safe and sound; and if you like I will help you return them to the desk. You see, Brother Rodeny, he took them while I was up stairs. No fault of mine, I assure you."

"I reckon they are all safe and no harm is done. They have no value to any person in the world except myself and Howard. I expect, Felix, I am under obligations to you for this early recovery of these heart treasures," answered Colonel Grayson, holding up a bundle of the letters from his wife.

"Don't mention that, Brother Rodeny. If you only would call on me oftener I might be of service to you. How is Mary Lou and how is her patient doing this morning?"

"Tolerably well, I think, in both cases."

And the parson drove on. Pleas, who stood by while the explanation was being made, did not forgive as quickly as his master, or perhaps suspected more evil. As he lifted the bag full of documents, he said to Colonel Grayson: "Dat Jonas Smith git hisself hu't, he doan min'.".

The harvest of all this splurge was a stack of old squirrel guns and flintlocks, each and every one of which was a keepsake. Some had been handed down from ancestors who had braved the terrors of pioneer life, or the perils of the war for Independence. The witnesses of incipient insurrection or sedition were wholly wanting.

But the exploit had its issue. The delicate social structure that had been reared over the waste and ruin of the war, was rent; the quiet

of home life was barbarously shocked; the parole, given in good faith, was dishonorably violated,—but not by the ex-confederate—all this by the ruffianly interposition of the political arm of the Government, the Government that had exchanged its vows of protection for unconditional surrender. The apprehensive ones were again alarmed, and as they met asked one of another: "What next?" The more hopeful said: "The honor of the victor must equal the humiliation of the vanquished, hence our perfect peace is near." But they knew not the force of Political Necessity—that god or demon that is blind to contract, express or implied, and deaf to every appeal for justice and humanity.

After a few days of turmoil and anxiety, the work of rebuilding and the burden of sorrow and disappointment were resumed. The loss of time was small, but the hours were precious in the frenzied struggle for bread. The added weight of sorrow and gloom to those already staggering with their melancholy load, represented the iniquity of the whole proceeding.

Captain Avery, who carried a full store of official dignity and independence, sought no opening for an explanation of his conduct in making the search, and continued without interruption his visits to Elmington, and his rides on horseback in company with Mary Lou. The third day after the incident of the search he met Manning Lewis there and marked a formality of manner in him never before displayed. This was new treatment, and Avery dismissed it as one of the unhappy results of the raid. He had expected it from

every quarter, and had been surprised that the Graysons had not so much as mentioned the subject. Of the score of persons affected by the search whom he had met, Lewis was the only one who made show of resentment.

On the other hand Manning Lewis had watched with keen interest the frequent rides of the Federal Captain with Mary Lou. This had given him no unusual concern, for he knew of her unflagging loyalty to her people, and often had listened to her sharp raillery of Avery. But now, after the most high-handed exhibition of authority, the Captain continued his visits, and to all appearances, was as heartily received as before. He now felt certain that his rival had made an impression beyond his most jealous fears.

Avery's progress must be stopped at all hazards; yet Lewis dared not mention the matter either to Mary Lou or Howard. There was suggested but one course — Avery must answer to him in person. Yet he had no right or claim to speak for Mary Lou; only Howard or Colonel Grayson could do that, and they seemed content. As he brooded over the disappointment that threatened him, the matter of the recent search struck him full in the face like a personal rebuff. The stealth and mistrust of the incursion was an outrage to their honorable intentions and well-observed parole. Some one ought to be made responsible for this gratuitous and brutal insult to all his people; and who, but Avery, could be held to accountability?

Without considering the political results of the act, he decided to raise a personal quarrel and get

his revenge. Twice he sought a meeting, casual in appearance, but failed. On the third evening occasion favored, and Manning Lewis and Captain Avery met at the foot of a hill on the old Kosciusko turnpike.

Avery was riding the horse of his lieutenant and leading his own horse, all accoutred for Miss Mary Lou. He was already late for his appointment, and was making all possible speed, but Manning with his horse across the way, blocked the pike.

"Good-evening, Captain Avery," said Manning, in no friendly voice and manner. "I have hoped for several days to see you, when there were no ladies present, to have a little talk."

"I will grant you a few minutes, with the greatest of pleasure, although I am already late for my appointment. How can I serve you, Lieutenant Lewis?"

"In no way, I thank you; we of the South are asking no service right now. I have been wanting to ask you why you insisted on putting that infamous order for the search of our house into such peremptory and oppressive form?"

"Well, Lieutenant, in the first place, I don't know that I 'insisted' on doing it. I had the order and executed it as seemed best to me. All were treated alike; no favors were shown. I believe that is all I am called upon to explain."

"But you found nothing; we are keeping our paroles; in fact the gentlemen of this part of the country have the habit of keeping their word. It looked to me like you suspected us to be guilty of violating our oaths of surrender. You knew all

this, yet indulged in an insinuating, suspicious business."

"I regret that my method of executing instructions does not accord with the customs of this Section, and consequently has not pleased you; but I have no explanation or apology to offer in this instance. I did not stop to consider results, and never do when I have orders at stake. You are a military man, and know how that is, Lieutenant Lewis."

"I am not asking for excuses, or explanations, or apologies, or whether I am a military man, or what I know. You represent power, force, arms, and a cowardly administration; one that does not blush or hesitate to strike a people who are hungry and defenceless. We have been deceived in you, that's all. We have thought you better than your company, but this underhanded stroke convinces me that you are one of them, a willing tool for scoundrels."

"That's pretty strong language, Lieutenant Lewis."

"I have no wish to modify it, sir. If necessary, I can express my meaning more directly."

"Oh, I understand you, perfectly; but, the time is inopportune for a discussion that follows the turn you have given to this. I have an engagement with a lady at this moment," said Avery, coolly looking at his watch, "and must bid you good-evening. But I shall be at my headquarters later and will attend to any communication you may see fit to address to me. Or, I will see Mr. Dodge on my way, and try to arrange for him to represent me."

"Ah, if a lady is waiting, I will not longer detain you, but will bid you good-evening, Captain Avery."

And each rode his way.

Avery pushed on with all possible speed toward Elmington, his thoughts dividing honors between the two extremes: the prospect of a personal encounter with Manning Lewis, and the anticipation of a pleasant ride with Mary Lou. "Well, here is a pretty fight on hand, just when I thought everything was going swimmingly," he ruminated. "And it will be a fight, too; as Mary Lou would say, a 'sure-enough' fight. But, thank heaven, I shall have one ride more. Guess I brought it on myself, although Lewis played the fool — unless he proposes to stand sponsor for the whole country. I might have known that somebody would take me up; these people stand together so infernally. I suppose Miss Mary Lou will be more charming than ever to-night, and then I shall wish that I had been more conciliatory."

At Saunders' Lodge he made a stop, to confer with Mr. Dodge.

"I have a little affair on," said Avery, "and I have called to ask you to help me through the preliminaries. I can not call in any of the men in my company, without involving them in trouble with the Department; and I know your discretion is to be trusted. In all probability it will be over inside of twelve hours. Perhaps you would like to be present at the finish."

"With pleasure, Captain, with pleasure! When I was up North for my health, I came near having

one of these little scraps myself, over a substitute I had sold; but the other fellow got wind of the fact I was from Tennessee and would fight, and he just pulled out and ran — ran like a turkey. Now, Captain, what instructions?" said Dodge, with his inevitable bluster.

"None! Agree to everything but delay; I want the thing over with at the break of day to-morrow. Above all, don't mention it to any person."

"What surgeon, Captain?"

"None! I don't want any fool doctor to go away and blab the whole thing. Leave that to Lewis. By the way, I forgot to mention that Lieutenant Lewis will send a friend to confer with you to-night, probably."

"Lewis? Whew! There is great blood in the veins of Manning Lewis. But it's better for you that it is Manning rather than the old Major. The young blood is game, though. Yes, sieree! What distance, Captain? Better make it one hundred feet!"

"Let him name the distance."

"About weapons, shall it be duelling pistols or navy revolvers?" persisted Dodge, who was trying to show familiarity with affairs of honor.

"I don't care which. Please arrange these details, and report to me to-night, so that I can fix some little matters and be on time in the morning."

"But, Captain, this is very sudden," said Dodge, who began to comprehend that he was about to engage in serious business. "How did it come about? Is the fellow jealous? Yes, yes, that's it; you're taking his sweetheart by storm, and it nettles him."

"I had not thought of that," answered Avery. "No, it is the consequence of that infernal search I had to make. I might have conducted it with more consideration. If I had not been received socially, results would have been different; but under the circumstances, my method was a little harsh. Then I refused to make any explanation, and got called down; so there you have it. And now I am off for another ride, perhaps my last."

He found Mary Lou waiting, not impatiently, but with her spirit of raillery in full command.

"Oh, I am so glad you are late! Energy, promptness, and hurry are such virtues with you Yankees that I rejoice in your downfall," she exclaimed.

"I never explain or apologize to men when I become the victim of the inevitable; but with ladies it is different. I started out in good time, but was twice interrupted, and had to be absolutely rude to get here by now. I hope you have not been inconvenienced."

"Not in the least. How differently we regard things! With us an interruption of a business nature is cast aside until a more convenient time; but when we meet a neighbor in the turnpike, to stop for a visit is the inevitable."

"Well, my delay was caused by business and pleasure both, so I stand justified before you and with myself. What a glorious evening for a ride!"

For the hour Avery was in his best spirits; his military mood seemed to have loosened by reaction from the strain of his quarrel. When he was about to take his leave, he remarked, rather

casually: "I would gladly ask for a canter to-morrow evening, but at this moment I am not certain that the time will be at my disposal. Can't tell exactly how it will be with me at this time, twenty-four hours hence." Then with more feeling he continued: "You can not know how these rides have broken the tedium of camp life, and relieved the round of duties — often distasteful duties."

"I never before knew that a good soldier found duties odious," she answered. "Soldiers are supposed to like duty; that is what keeps them in the service in times of peace, like the present. Be that as it may, my company has furnished a sort of antidote, and I have not lived in vain. But seriously, Captain Avery, these evening rides have brought me a world of health and a good bit of pleasure."

"No, Miss Grayson, duties are not always pleasant, and I never shall have a better opportunity than the present to make you my confessor. I had an order to execute only a few days ago that was most detestable. That all my friends here did not misunderstand me is the only compensation I have for the secret misery I endured."

"But to hate one's duty is not heroic."

"Then cowardly, be it. I am thinking seriously of quitting the service because I can see it is drifting toward a line of work that will be intolerable to me. If I had no friends here, matters would be different."

"Have soldiers friends, then? I thought they had orders, alone; and knew only obedience. You are becoming really entertaining and in-

structive. Do you mean to tell me that the soldier can distinguish between friend and foe?"

"In his heart, he can."

"In his heart! What is that in the soldier?" she interrupted, tantalizingly.

"Oh, we have hearts, or perhaps sentiments, that we choose to designate as hearts. It is the presence of those sentiments that has caused me many times to think of quitting the service. When I have returned from one of these rides through this most varied and beautiful spread of nature, in company with the most charming young lady in the world, I hate myself for my occupation."

"Really, Captain Avery? Then your antidote is only another poison. You are indeed sorely afflicted."

"But I have decided to resign my commission — decided on it to-night. I think that I shall settle down here in Tennessee and become a planter. I like the people here the best of any I ever have known; I like your easy way of visiting when you ought to be at work. There seems to be in life something more than the bustle and wrangle of money-getting. Do you think I'll be welcomed as a citizen?"

"Every gentleman who speaks the English language and attends to his own affairs is welcome in the South; and I believe you answer these qualifications. But are you certain that you can accustom yourself permanently to our slow, easy ways?"

"Perhaps that would depend on my immediate surroundings. But I have decided to resign; and

after that, I'll take up the matter of resigning myself to your methods of life in a regular and systematic manner," he said, thoughtfully.

"Be certain to do everything in regular and systematic order; that is both military and Yankee-like. I've had a delightful ride; good-night." And she went into the house, serious enough beneath the surface of nonsense and banter.

XIX

SUNRISE AND PISTOLS

AFTER an hour of vain protest, Howard Grayson consented to represent his old comrade in his quarrel; but, to speak the whole truth, he acquiesced only when Manning threatened to look elsewhere for a friend and second. Howard sought to carry overtures of peace.

"You know, Manning, that I don't believe in this method of settling disputes, until every argument has failed," he said. "You and Avery are both such reasonable fellows, it is impossible that this quarrel should lead to the Bluff, if either will give over a bit."

"Yes, you are like father," answered Manning. "He prates against affairs of honor, and claims that he never did believe in them; yet he has been out twice and is ready to go again on very slight provocation. No, I shall stand to the ground I have taken, and if you want to be present at the finish, go at once and arrange with Dodge for the meeting. No delays, old man; to-morrow morning, early, and on the Bluff. That is a lucky place for the Lewises; father came off twice without a scratch; and I need all the luck I can get, for Avery is a good man. He's the pluckiest Yankee ever I knew."

Howard more than half suspected that his friend was moved more by jealousy than by any other passion, and he still hoped to make peace. He would work through Mr. Dodge, he thought.

But in this hope Howard was again to be disappointed, for Dodge was mightily swelled with importance. This was his first appearance in any capacity in a personal affair, and the three hours that had passed since his talk with Avery had been occupied with imbibing bellicose sentiments and rehearsing lofty speeches. In the Saunders library were several books on Chivalry, handed down from pre-revolutionary times, when the first of the name and family came over from England to the rugged estate of a youngest son. These books Dodge ran over hastily, reading a paragraph here and there, until he was charged to explosion with quixotic sentiments.

It needed but the appearance of Howard at the library door to touch him off.

"Well, well, my boy, come at last have you? Been waiting for you for more than two hours! Nasty business, ain't it? Yes, yes, especially for you, who have to represent the oppressor. Sorry for you, Howard, sorry for you; indeed I am! Lewis is an oppressor, and ought to die; yes, sreee, ought to die; and by thunder, he shall die! The villain, the villain! Horrible, yes sir, horrible of him to way-lay an honorable gentleman in the King's high road and there insult him until he is forced to challenge, or flee like a coward. And what is it all about? Why, forsooth, Avery has stolen his lady-love! Well, Howard, shall we proceed to business? What suggestions or demands have you to make in behalf of this oppressor?"

Howard smiled coldly during this tirade, and as it came to an end some minutes sooner than he

expected it would, was not quite prepared with a direct answer.

"I have been trying to bring about peace, Mr. Dodge. It seems entirely unnecessary that these two gentlemen, both of whom are friends to you and me, should face each other with pistols. That means that one or perhaps two good friends are to be shot down before our eyes, when we might prevent it."

"No instructions on that subject, my boy, sorry to say, for I would do almost anything to please you. No, no, your party is the oppressor, and if he is afraid to fight just out with it, and I will inform my principal, and all is off. I never thought Manning Lewis was a coward; but if he is, just say so! Out with it, Howard, my boy, and we will declare this tourney nil! Is Lewis afraid?"

"You know the Lewis blood too well to ask any such question seriously, Mr. Dodge. I worked for an hour to get to bring a message of peace; and failing of that, to have the thing delayed a day, but to no avail. Won't Captain Avery make some concessions?"

"Well, I guess not; not Captain Avery! If he does I shall refuse to represent him. I won't mix with cowards. When I was up North for my health, I had an affair on my hands; but the other fellow got wind that I was from Tennessee, and he just naturally slunk out. Ran like a turkey! No, Howard, we are here to arrange the joust — but it's not quite a joust either," said Mr. Dodge, turning the pages of one of his musty old volumes, "no, a joust is a mock battle; it's a tilt, a real,

sure-enough battle. My principal says to-morrow at sunrise. What say you, Howard?"

"The hour is satisfactory to us. But can't we fix it up? I tell you Mr. Dodge, I despise to think that I must see one or perhaps two personal friends shot down over a petty quarrel. Let's go together and see Avery right now; I can talk with him freely."

"Time agreed on," said Dodge, in a business air. "We shall get this up pretty quickly. I like a hustler, Howard, in anything. Well, what next? What next?" And he consulted a memorandum sheet in which he had a list of requirements for a businesslike duel, and scratched off the first item with his pencil. "Now weapons come next. Which shall it be? Swords, guns, pistols, navy-revolvers, or what? Take your choice, Howard."

"If this infamous business must proceed, I shall have to say regulation pistols," said Howard doggedly, for he began to suspect that he would have to make overtures of peace through another than Dodge.

"Good again, and satisfactory! We shall have no trouble, Howard," said Dodge, as he scratched another entry from his memorandum; and without looking up he called off: "Item three, on foot or horseback?"

"Horses are somewhat out of vogue for such events I believe, Mr. Dodge."

"Not necessarily, my boy, not necessarily! All a matter of agreement. But you say on foot and so it shall be. Item four, distance. What say you, Howard, to one hundred feet?"

"The most reasonable and peaceful suggestion you have made; but neither would consent to it," answered Howard.

"They will have to consent to it! We are fixing this matter, and if we say forty yards with brickbats, they must abide the decision." And Mr. Dodge again referred to one of his books on Chivalry, for proper authority in the premises. "These men are in our hands, Howard, and must fulfill our agreements or both stand before the world branded as arrant cowards and oppressive villains. What else is a second for? I am looking for proper authority, and I have it too, in these good old books."

"Well, say twenty-five paces, then," said Howard, by way of compromise that would stop Dodge from reading half a volume of authorities, obsolete by more than two centuries.

"Well and good," consented Mr. Dodge, laying down the book and scratching the item of distance off his sheet. "Item five, surgeon."

"We don't care for any," answered Howard. "If I don't make the presence of a surgeon unnecessary, by fixing the matter up, then we will take the consequences."

"Avery don't want any, either," said Dodge. "And that's the only thing I object to. Now, let's have Doctor Anderson. What say you?"

"I don't care," said Howard, carelessly; he was still thinking of settlement.

"Scratch item five, all settled! Item six, audience. How many shall we invite?"

"Nobody but principals, seconds, and the surgeon, of course."

"Well and good," and Dodge made another scratch across the paper. "Item seven, place. Where shall it be?"

"On the old Bluff, I reckon," said Howard, thoughtfully; for fixing the place, more than any other article, had made the event seem real to him.

"Item eight, rounds. How many, Howard?"

"One, only one."

"Well and good, again." And Dodge made another dash at his memorandum sheet with his pencil. "Now, Howard, the whole thing is fixed, I believe, according to degenerate modern usage. In good old times, our ancestors had some twenty matters of detail to arrange. Go to the oppressor and report; I will see Captain Avery, and we will all meet on the Bluff at sun-up. Wait now, and let me arrange a written report for my principal; this must be done in a businesslike manner." And he took pen and paper, reading aloud as he wrote, item by item, all the cold-blooded details.

"Want a copy, Howard?" he asked.

"No, I think not, thank you; guess I can remember all this disgusting business. Good-night, Mr. Dodge."

"Good-night, Howard. We have arranged what will no doubt be a celebrated duel; may go into history, my boy. Lewis and Avery, duel; Dodge and Grayson, seconds; Anderson, M. D., surgeon. Reads well, don't it? Such is history; such is fame," said Mr. Dodge, as he lighted Howard down the hall.

The two men prepared for the event with deliberation and perfect tranquillity of spirit. Manning

had two letters written when Howard drew rein under his window at Fairfax, to tell him that the arrangement required his presence on the Bluff at sunrise. One was to his father and mother; the other to Mary Lou.

Avery had written and signed his resignation from the army, to take effect on that day, July 1st, the day before the meeting, when Dodge arrived at camp and made known the terms and conditions. The Captain excused himself for a moment and went to the tent of his first lieutenant, whom he awoke from sound sleep. "I am going out gunning with some friends early in the morning," he said to his second officer, "and if, by any chance, I should be delayed beyond noon, please to see that this letter is posted so that it will reach the adjutant on the afternoon train. Don't post before noon, for if I get back in time and feel like it, I may run down to Nashville myself."

And after delivering some general orders for camp duty in the morning, he returned to face an hour's bombast from Mr. Dodge. The enthusiastic second discoursed learnedly on affairs of honor, not failing to quote authority in support of all his wild propositions. But the question of peace, he never once mentioned.

At last, to the infinite relief of Avery, who had yawned several times, Mr. Dodge withdrew and started for home. Scarcely had he mounted his horse and turned down the dark street when Howard Grayson stepped from the shadow of a tree and moved quickly to the Captain's tent.

"I can not go home without making one effort to bring about an understanding between you and Lieutenant Lewis," he said, without waiting to say good-evening. "I have presumed on the friendship I feel for you, and that I believe you bear to my family to violate one of the most stringent rules of the Code, and to see privately the opposing principal before the event. Can't this business be stopped now and here?"

"You are certainly very good, but I don't quite see how, especially as your party is the aggressor," answered Avery, with some indifference. "This is no quarrel of my seeking — it came as a complete surprise — and I must either fight or run. I'm too lazy to run, so I suppose, it's fight."

"Manning Lewis and I have been friends since before either of us can remember, and never had a quarrel to last above ten minutes," said Howard. "I would shudder to see him face my worst enemy; but now arrangements are complete for him to face you, whom I have come to regard my good personal friend — second to Manning only in length of acquaintance. The truth is, Avery, we all feel under obligations to you."

"Stop there, please," said Avery, good-naturedly. "The Grayson family owes me nothing, not even good-will. The freedom of your house has brought me more pleasure than any incident of my life; and I am happy to have the opportunity to say that now. I may not have a chance to speak of it again," he continued, with a smile. "To meet the wishes of any member of Colonel Grayson's family, I will sacrifice anything — save honor. In this emergency, it seems as if this

sacrifice alone will make peace, and I know you will not ask it."

"But can't we stop it some way? I have worked so faithfully with Manning, but he will not listen. He's usually so reasonable, but to-night he is clean daft," said Howard, in despair.

"Then nothing can be done, only to let the fools fight it out," answered Avery. "But to you I will say, in a confidence that does not extend beyond the Grayson family, that I don't feel satisfied with the manner in which I executed my last order from the War Department. I wanted to be fair and impartial, but I did not think until it was too late, that I was going to another extreme and was doing what might appear to be a boorish act."

"We took no exceptions to that," said Howard, "although some did, Manning in particular. You have duties to perform; and while your method of execution may differ from mine, that does not necessarily condemn it. Let me repeat this conversation to Manning and I will vouch for a complete cessation of hostilities."

"Ah, no, I could have done that this evening when he met me in the turnpike and rallied me so fiercely, but I chose the present course. No, it is none of his business how I execute military orders, and I won't hold myself to answer to him. If I die, then the Grayson family loses a friend, but one who has been of little use to them, I regret to say."

"We do not esteem our friends by the quantity or quality of their services to us," answered

Howard. "The Southern people have higher ideas of friendship than that; although when our friends favor us with an expression of regard we appreciate it. Must I go home without accomplishing anything toward a reconciliation?"

"I fear so, Captain Grayson," said Avery, with a yawn. "Pray excuse me, but the hour is late and I am quite a regular sleeper. Just let things take their course, and be reconciled to results. But whatever the outcome, we understand each other better than we did before this interview. If all goes well, I shall retire from the army and live in Tennessee; I like most of your people."

"I hope we may all live through to-morrow, and that you may keep your resolve to become a citizen here. You will be welcomed heartily. We have great regard for the amenities of life, until we get mad, or until our honor is involved. I wish you good-night, Captain Avery." And they shook hands.

At daylight all were on the Bluff. Thanks to the cold-blooded method of Mr. Dodge, there were no revolting details to be arranged. He and Howard withdrew a little distance with the mahogany case containing Major Lewis's pistols. The loading began, but the sight of the cold steel unnerved Dodge, and his hand trembled so badly that he was forced to give over the job to Howard. The poor man who had been so fierce and loud the night before, could not speak a sentence — his knees shook, he stammered, gabbled incoherently, and seemed on the verge of collapse.

"Better step off the distance," said Howard, who noticed the embarrassment of his co-second, and thought to relieve him. Dodge returned to the open space, stuck a twig into the soil, fitted the heel of his boot to it carefully and started off, counting each step loud enough to be heard two hundred yards away. "One, two, three, four," he roared and staggered on until he had counted thirteen, when he stepped on a rolling limb that upset him and lost him the count. He started again, roaring out the numbers, and puffing audibly with each step. At last, with the fourth essay, he had twenty-five paces marked with a stake at either end, and the distance was nearer one hundred feet than the seventy-five intended.

By this time the sun had begun to show above the line of the horizon. The scene was too beautiful to be blurred by bloodshed; yet man is such a beast that he little regards the face of nature in the presence of his passions. The Bluff, a stray spur of the Cumberlands, rose sheer on its face more than a hundred feet above the blue line of the Opal. Stretching away to the westward for more than three miles was the fertile and almost level valley, green in varying shades as crop or blue-grass covered the soil. And, winding through this verdant cover at irregular intervals were the hedgerows of osage-orange, hickory, and ash, like lace-work of delicate shading on a rich, sombre background. All this was in the shadow, strong and heavy, for the rays of the sun were yet horizontal.

Beyond rose the hills that bounded this Eden on the west, like a great wall decked with green

and yellow; the drought had made perceptible inroads on the verdure of the higher lands. Here the sun first spread his fiery sheen, and seemed to gild tree, rock, and sloping field with all his morning splendor. To the east, the Bluff dropped off to the turnpike, a quarter of a mile away, and was covered with a dense forest of oaks, so that the first sight of breaking day was reflected back from the hills on the west.

While Howard was loading the weapons and Mr. Dodge was puffing and roaring with his tangling legs and count, Manning stood leaning against a tree, contemplating the magnificent view of green and gold; and Avery, fifty yards away, was unconsciously demonstrating his practical nature by throwing bits of rock into the calm surface of the stream below. "This would make a great picnic ground," he said carelessly to Dodge; and when that worthy puffed down near Manning, he, in turn, remarked: "How beautiful this view to the west. I never knew of it before, or this would not be my first visit to the Bluff at sunrise." The answer to Avery was: "One," puff, "two," puff, "three," puff; to Manning it was: "Twenty-three," puff, "twenty-four," puff, "twenty-five," puff.

The weapons were loaded, and all preliminaries were arranged. Before taking his place Avery said to Dodge: "Now if this thing goes badly for me, please say to Lieutenant Lewis that I have resigned my commission and am no longer an officer in the Federal army. But for that he would be liable to court-martial, and to be shot for having fired on an officer."

"Wait, wait," cried Dodge, when Avery was about half through, "let me write that down; my memory is awfully bad." He had found his voice, although it was somewhat shaky.

"Never mind the writing, better to forget than go to so much trouble. I am under great obligations to you, Mr. Dodge, for what you have done for me in this matter; and if you want to make the obligation complete, please do not speak of what has already occurred, or what may occur during the next few minutes—at least of my part in it. Above all, don't brag of my nerve; that is my last request before toeing the scratch."

Dodge could not answer—he only gulped.

The principals were placed. Dodge leaned against a tree for support. Doctor Anderson started the count, "One," but was interrupted by the cry: "Help, help! Doc—," and Dodge fell in a heap at the foot of the sheltering tree.

"Stand your ground; go ahead with the count; I don't care for him," roared Avery.

The Doctor continued: "Two, three."

There was one report, but there were two puffs of blue smoke; the pistol dropped from Manning Lewis's hand. Howard and the Doctor ran to his support, but he put them off, saying: "It's nothing; only a scratch on the arm. Load for another round."

Avery turned on his heel, and tossed his weapon to one side. "Load if you want to; I'll stay for the finish," he said, savagely.

But Howard insisted that only one shot was provided for by the terms of the event.

All hands now turned in to revive Dodge,

which proved no hard task; for, after he had lain a few minutes with his head down hill, he responded to a heroic dose from the Doctor's brandy flask, and gave a few groans and other signs of recovery.

The situation had grown suddenly embarrassing, by reason of the general interest in Dodge; both principals seemed for the moment to have forgotten their quarrel. Speculation as to what the next move in the drama would have been, (for a crisis of some kind was imminent, since all were on the verge of laughter over the ludicrous spectacle made by Mr. Dodge), was cut short by a distant "Hello," from the direction of the turnpike. Howard and Manning looked at each other, and the latter almost gasped, "Father!"

The first shout was followed by another, then a third, nearer and more distinct; and in the space of a minute's time the sound of the hoof-beats of a horse came up through the dense forest. Doctor Anderson had resumed the work of bandaging Manning's wounded arm; Howard was helping Avery to remove his coat, and Dodge was on the ground, a groaning, rolling mass, when Major Lewis, mounted on an old clay-bank mule, rounded the point of a spur in the Bluff and charged straight into the party. But the precipitancy of the Major's entry was no fair measure of his mental state. He greeted them: "Good-morning, gentlemen," with perfect composure, dismounted leisurely, surveyed the scene with the eye of a connoisseur, and then said:—

"What does all this mean?"

There was no answer.

"I seem to have surprised a little party of some sort. You must excuse me for appearing here without a formal invitation — it is purely accidental, I assure you all."

"A little misunderstanding, Major Lewis, but all is over now, I reckon," said Howard, who was first to find speech.

"All over with Dodge, I should say," remarked the Major, coolly. "But what kind of a performance was it! Manning bandaged, Captain Avery bleeding, and Dodge scared to death! This must have been a three-cornered fight, the like of which I never heard, outside of Marryat's 'Midshipman Easy.' If you will pardon the intrusion of my coming here unbidden, I will trespass again to ask an explanation. What means this business, Manning?"

For all the good-nature of his remarks, there was a quality of anxiety and an inflection of command in the Major's voice. Manning answered as indifferently as possible: "Captain Avery and I had a misunderstanding, and have settled it; Dodge fainted on the sound of Doctor Anderson's voice."

"Never mind about this booby," said the Major, with a glance at Dodge. "You and Captain Avery had a misunderstanding? Well, I am damned! Why did n't you tell me? If you were not twenty-four years old I would rawhide you right here. Don't you know that Captain Avery is my personal friend? That we are all under a thousand obligations to him? No, I reckon you did n't know it." Then turning to Avery, he continued: "Captain, allow me to

apologize for the impetuosity of my family. The boy did not know how highly I esteem you, or your morning's nap never would have been disturbed for this performance. I don't know where the boy gets this rash temper—from his mother's family, I reckon!" There was a peculiar twinkle in the Major's eye as he made this explanation. "Allow me, Captain Avery, to introduce to you my son, Manning—Lieutenant Manning Lewis. Manning, my son, this is Captain Avery, my esteemed personal friend." And the young men gave each to the other his left hand, shook awkwardly, and looked foolish.

"Did he stand his ground, Captain?" asked the Major.

"Your son is a gentleman, and as brave as I ever knew," answered Avery.

"Then I forgive his rashness. Nothing serious about these scratches, Doctor?"

"No, no, Major! A slight rupture of the voluntary muscle, flexor carpi ulnaris; but happily, the radius and ulna escaped fracture. Captain Avery sustained little more than a contusion, cut through the epidermis a trifle; but it was a close call for the right latissimus dorsi." The Doctor was of the old school and revelled in Latin.

"Now for a little English, Doctor. Are both of them game?" asked the Major, entering into the spirit of the occasion.

"To the core, Major. Never saw a better exhibition, and this is not my first visit to the Bluff at sunrise," answered the Doctor. He had been there twice with the Major.

"Then all else is forgiven."

"I can not equal your magnanimity, Major Lewis; but I may have done wrong in the peremptory manner in which I executed the last orders of the War Department. I intended no wrong, surely, but I gave offense," said Avery.

"I don't believe you were wrong, Captain; I'm damned if I do. My friends never do wrong," said the Major.

By this time Mr. Dodge had recovered, and was able to sit upright. He rubbed his eyes, looked wildly about, and asked: "What is the meaning of all this? Where am I? When did you get in, Major? Did I have a spell? Yes, yes, one of those old spells again! Before I went up North for my health, I had several of them. This is the worst climate on earth; I must leave it, or die of biliousness."

"Try a little more brandy, Mr. Dodge," said the Doctor.

"Yes, yes, a little brandy is good for these spells. It was a glorious tilt, Major; you ought to have come earlier. Great event; historical, sure! Avery and Lewis, principals; Dodge and Grayson, seconds; Anderson, M. D., surgeon. It's well this spell didn't take me earlier; 't would have spoiled history. I'm all right now; yes, siree, all right now!"

According to arrangements made before the event, Howard and Manning went from the Bluff to the Plain of Tempe, for a few days' fishing. Should there be any legal consequences, this seclusion placed them where they could meet or escape them, as occasion might dictate. Pleas,

who was the only person in the world, except those actually present, that knew of the duel, had been charged with the double duty of watching for danger and of communicating information to the young gentlemen.

Avery rode back to camp, called at the tent of the lieutenant, recovered and destroyed his resignation. His mind had changed. For some few days he complained of indisposition, had an occasional visit from Doctor Anderson, and lounged about his tent. He could not ride on horseback, for while his wound was slight, the motion of the exercise produced great pain.

XX

GENIUS IS RECOGNIZED

THE 21st day of July, eighteen hundred and sixty-five, was a proud day for the State Government in Tennessee. For three years it had led a most precarious and contradictory existence. In effect, it had maintained a bold and aggressive front, the terror of crippled and aged men, of women and children whose protectors were in the Confederate army—of all helpless and defenseless persons. In fact, a more servile, fawning, favor-seeking combination of knaves never was made to do unholy traffic in political spoils and tawdry honors. While, at home, it levied unwarranted taxes, evicted women and children from ancestral homes for the non-payment of these impossible burdens, threatened, browbeat, and even incarcerated honorable citizens for imaginary and made-up offense, intimidated and terrorized as a profession, it crawled and cringed before Congress and the Executive of the Nation. What it wanted was recognition; and to secure recognition it pleaded its odious record of three years of anarchy, and pledged itself to execute as much more and as detestable infamy as should meet the requirements of political necessity in Tennessee.

And through all these four gloomy years of civil war, with their changing fortunes of success and disaster, the National Government had grasped at every straw that promised support. It

had made use of a thousand "scape-goats;" it needed now, a thousand each day. Yet, strange to relate, the National party had passed the "Ten Per Cent Government" of Tennessee, for all its promises of loyalty, claim to power and desire to play the "scape-goat," without one poor look of recognition.

The reason for all this cold-hearted treatment can be found only in the infamous record of the State Government. It was too foul for the tainted atmosphere of Washington! Besides, at the head of National affairs had been an honest man, who fought the encroachments of political filth with more energy than he fought the open foe on the battlefield.

But now Lincoln, the honorable man, the patriot, was dead; the horde of place-hunters were all alive. It is one of the absurdities of Fate, that history has never been called upon to record the time when and the place where one of these persistent office-seeking worthies, however deserving of such an end, became a target for the bullet of the maniac or the monster.

Some persons have been ungenerous enough to charge that the radical faction of the then dominant party was jealous of the superior genius of the "Ten Per-Centers" for the invention of infamy, and their capacity for the shameless execution of it; but the great majority incline to the more magnanimous view: that the National party chose to get the benefits of all this dirty work without any direct accountability for, or association with, those who so cheerfully did it. Without further digression to discuss the weighty

problem of scoundrelism in State and National politics, of how the blending, by experienced hands, of the different grades and shades of rascality tends to ultimate virtue and the good of the masses, it may be said without fear of contradiction, or danger of inciting argument, that the reward of genius, even the genius for villainy, is recognition.

So, after all these years of administering consternation, and receiving disappointment, the tardy reward was at hand! On this good day and year of grace, the genius that manipulated the affairs of the State secured from Congress the recognition for which the "Ten Per Cent Government" had so ardently hoped, so cheerfully slaved and so zealously prostituted itself. It was a weakly thing, after all, this National avowal; but it was, as one of them sagely remarked, "a start-er." And these statesmen of local fame were more responsive to encouragement than to rebuffs.

The State Administration now thought itself on a substantial footing. It was inferentially a part of the Federal Compact, and the persons high in its organization set themselves to reduce bushwhacking to a system. They advanced from professional to scientific methods. To their genius for creating outrageous laws and their audacity in administering them, they added systematic and scientific modes of punishment.

With the introduction of a degree of accountability to a superior power, one would have expected greater caution in their operations; but not so. There were old reckonings unsatisfied;

the eternal grudge that low life bears to decency was still alive and rankling. And with the persons forming and supporting this State Government no amount of revenge seemed to sate their consuming greed for vengeance.

Accordingly, old matters, many outlawed, some already settled in the courts, were revived; new ones were started with wonderful alacrity. They seemed to regard neither the statute of limitations, nor the ancient law, *Res adjudicata*. This was especially true at Kosciusko, where the County Guards had lost much valuable time through the equitable interference of Captain Avery.

One of the first cases they attempted to revive was that against Howard Grayson and Manning Lewis — the charge of wearing Rebel uniforms. But through the influence of Anton Nelson this had been dismissed on order of the Governor, and the Guards stood in awe of that dignitary. The ingenious brain of Jonas Smith met the exigency. He remembered that when the Guards were carrying off these young gentlemen for the sham trial before Squire Witan, both had made remarks uncomplimentary to the State Administration, and somewhat questioned the democracy of a government that represented about ten per cent of the people over whom it exercised power. To question the acts of the State Government was a crime; to criticise it was treason before the law. Without delay, Smith lodged complaint with his honor, N. Lex Witan, and a warrant was issued for the apprehension of the young men. But neither Howard nor Manning had been seen for three weeks, and Major Lewis seemed utterly

ignorant of the whereabouts of his son. Both were known to be away from home. Before it should be known outside official circles that the warrant was issued, the County Guards decided to locate its prisoners, and charge down on them with force sufficient to effect their capture. And now mark the fine hand of the Reverend Felix Grayson! He suddenly appeared at Elmington and disclosed a friendly mission to Miss Mary Lou.

"But Howard is not at home," she said.

"Then get word to him at once," said Felix. "These fellows will put them in jail, and Mr. Nelson is not here to sign the bail-bond. Perhaps they will not admit the boys to bond! Can't tell what they will do! I would sign a bond for them, only as a Federal officer I am not permitted to do so. You see these fellows now have nominal backing from the National Government, and there is no telling what they will do. The boys must know of this and then make a visit into another State."

"They will not run. You know them too well for that; but they ought to know," she said, thoughtfully.

"They must know. I would go, only it never would do for me to mix with these State affairs. They will watch me, and perhaps I shall have to answer for this visit. They already suspect me of favoring brother Rodeny; but I can't help my interest in him, and you."

"You are very kind, and I am sure father appreciates your efforts. But Pleas has no suitable horse," said Mary Lou.

"Get Captain Avery's horse. He will gladly

lend it to you. I will carry a note to him. He is not riding now, for some reason, as you know."

"But would I not compromise Captain Avery by having his horse used for such a purpose?" she asked, with some disappointment.

"Not at all. Who is to know where the horse goes? You have not told me where Howard is. Write your note, quickly," he persisted.

But Mary Lou was not to be hurried. She took her time to consider the matter carefully, and then wrote this note:—

"Dear Captain Avery:

I must have a good horse for this afternoon and evening. Will you kindly lend me Pomp? You can not know the necessity that prompts this request. Rev. Mr. Grayson, who consents to carry this note, has assured me that I am right in asking. He knows the circumstances.

Sincerely,

Mary Lou Grayson.

P. S. Please send side-saddle by Pleas."

Then the Reverend Felix took Pleas in his carriage and drove him to camp. Pleas delivered the note into the hand of the Captain, who read it and said: "Her wishes don't have to be vouched for by that preacher. Does she want two saddles, Pleas?"

"I doan know, suh."

"Well, take both, to be safe. Ride mine and carry Miss Bosworth's; and get started pretty quickly," said Avery.

While Pleas was after the Captain's horse, Mary Lou went over to Saunders' Lodge and borrowed the best and fastest horse Mr. Dodge had in his stable. She wanted it for Pleas, she

said. When Uncle Sam led Dodge's horse, a large, strong black, almost worthy of all his master's praise, into the yard at Elmington, Pleas had arrived with Pomp and the two saddles.

"Change the saddles quickly, Pleas; you and I are going for a long ride. Better get a snack to eat; we shall not stop until after night."

Pleas's astonishment lasted but a second. He broke into a broad grin.

"I gets a snack, Miss Mary Lou. I gets de snack de League gives me." And he chuckled audibly. In a moment he returned, and patting his bulging pocket, in which was the revolver given him by the Union League, said: "Dere 's snack 'nuf fo' dis ride, Miss Mary Lou."

Uncle Sam waited on the front porch with a note for Colonel Grayson, and Mary Lou, with her faithful servant, rode off. As they went out of the park into the turnpike, neither Mary Lou nor her black protector saw two figures in old Federal uniforms hidden in a clump of trees that commanded a view of the road. Those two horsemen, sneaking in the brush, represented the State Government of Tennessee. After Mary Lou and Pleas had gone over the first hill to the north, the horsemen came from hiding. One rode south as swiftly as his horse could carry him, as if to give an alarm; the other rode north and took up the trail of the two horses that had left Elmington.

XXI

WHICH TREATS OF MEETING AND PARTING

THE usual route from Elmington to the Plain of Tempe lay through Kosciusko; but, on the suggestion of Pleas, Mary Lou took a longer course, which led off to the north for a mile and then to the south-west. Both roads met at the foot-hills, and there entered the main thoroughfare of that section, the old Military Road, laid out by General Jackson after the close of the war of 1812. In the opinion of Pleas, there was to be a race with Jonas Smith and posse, to see who first should reach this junction, and who first should enter the Military Road. He was satisfied that Felix Grayson, for all his claims of friendship, would report to the officers his conversation of the morning, together with his inference that the young gentlemen were at the Plain. But the negro was too considerate to alarm his young mistress with this suspicion.

Pleas knew that his young master and Manning Lewis were expected to return that very night, and unless intercepted at the junction, they would in all probability come by the shorter route. This he gave to Mary Lou as a reasonable excuse for making all possible haste until they should reach the foot-hills.

It was a beautiful afternoon in the full summer. The sun blazed down with the withering splendor of the hottest hour of a mid-summer day. The

dusty highway was deserted. The whites were at home with their work of rebuilding, the blacks were lounging about the Freedmen's Bureau.

Mary Lou led off at a smart canter. The Captain's horse was full of spirit from near a month of idleness. But before they had gone far at this pace, Pleas called out: "Is n't yo' ridin' tol'-able peart, Miss Mary Lou?"

"Our time is short, Pleas; we must reach our destination before dark, if possible."

"If yo' goin' to de Plain, min' yo' starts asy. Pleas gits yo' dar, chile. Go asy to de ole Brick Stan'; dar we lets de hosses drink a swaller of water, an' den we rides. Yo' hears old Pleas, Miss Mary Lou!"

And she listened to his advice, for the two miles to the old brick tavern were covered at an easy gait. Here he gave each horse little more than a swallow of water, and they pushed on.

For the next few miles Pleas kept admonishing, "asy," "asy;" not until the evening sun began to throw shadows across the pike did he cease to caution Mary Lou against the killing pace her impatience prompted her to set.

The Military Road was now not more than three miles distant; the sun was yet half an hour above the horizon; and, half-a-mile ahead, just round a turn in the pike, stood an old wayside inn.

"Let out'n de Yankee hoss, Miss Mary Lou; we water at de ole stan'," he said. And they made that half-a-mile as if riding for a record. After the horses had been given their small allowance of drink, Pleas said: "Dat hoss too sma't

fo' a Yankee. Mars Howard ought t'hev him." Then putting his hand into his pocket he continued, quickly: "'Scuse me a minute, Miss Mary Lou; I drap some leetle tricks outn my snack.' And he ran back to the turn in the road, to all appearances looking for something in the dust.

But while he seemed intent on the ground, his eye took in the long stretch of turnpike over which they had just ridden. As he came in full view of this he saw, half-a-mile back, a batch of horsemen, riding at full speed. His form was bent, and he appeared to be looking in the dust. They turned into an old field grown to sassafras bushes, high enough to hide horse and man. He counted; there were seven.

"Yo' hides, ole Jonas Smith, if yo' wants to. We-all ken hide, too," he muttered to himself, still hunting about in the dusty pike.

They thought they were not seen, but they little knew the subtlety of that honest negro.

Pleas returned leisurely to where his young mistress awaited him, mounted his horse, and took his place a length behind her: "Asy to de nex' tu'n, Miss Mary Lou," were his orders. They were obeyed with perfect confidence. It was a straight, level stretch, down a narrow valley, every foot of the road visible from the turn they had just now passed. The rays of the setting sun shot clean over, and left them in the shadow of a great ridge. The air was fresh and cool with the crispness of drought. The wood, which came down to the wayside, gave forth its evening fragrance. The chirp of the katydid, the vespers of a belated song-bird, and the hoof-beats

of their horses, were the only sounds. Not a human being was in sight; yet this delicate girl rode confidently on, at a walk, a trot, or a gallop, as Pleas advised. She never once looked back. Such exhibitions of perfect confidence have not been seen since the old-time negro passed out of life, into history.

At the turn in the road Pleas stole a glance over his shoulder and almost shouted, "Faster." Pomp responded to a looser rein and set the pace at a keen canter. For two miles they rode a rattling gait through the undulating, winding course, as the pike turned in and out around the base of the hills. Pleas's watchful eye was on the road, and his admonitions, "asy," "faster," "keerful, chile," came with almost every breath. The ride was desperate. Mary Lou did not realize that it had every element of a crisis, so intent was her purpose to reach the Plain. The horses, so carefully warmed under Pleas's direction, took the pace from brute sympathy. No whip was drawn; no word of encouragement was spoken. On, on they flew, until they reached the summit of a ridge, beyond which the two pikes joined.

To their left was a high, round hill, that stood between the two turnpikes, and rose a hundred feet above them. Straight ahead, to the southwest, across several intervening valleys and low hills, stood out the main dividing ridge that separated the waters of the Opal from those of the Swan River. Where the old Military Road crossed this divide, the timber had long ago been cut off, marking the location for one of those old taverns, or "stands," as they were called half a

century ago, with its truck-garden and pasture fields. This bleak old head now showed a clean, bald outline against the blazing gold of the sunset sky. And, as they scanned the streak of yellow clay that marked the road as it wound through the forest on the ridge-side until it was lost on the barren summit, two horsemen came into view, silhouetted against the burning background. Mary Lou gave a cry of delight, and waved her hand-kerchief.

"Mars Howard and Mister Mannin'," shouted Pleas. "Straight fo'd," he continued, quickly. "I rides roun' de hill to urr pike." And he swung his horse into a cow-path that connected the two roads. Mary Lou dashed on at the top of Pomp's speed, to reach her brother and friend. She caught not another glimpse of them, for the road wound out and in, up and down, through the dense forest, already coming dark. At the base of the ridge she met them.

Pleas followed the path through the under-brush, and came to the Kosciusko road. He examined closely the dust, and saw that no horsemen had gone west during the evening. He then knew that the only expedition sent after the young gentlemen had followed him and Miss Mary Lou, and this posse they had left a mile behind by his ruse at the old tavern. Then riding into a dense tangle of bushes he threw off the saddle and tied his horse to a swinging limb.

"Naow res' yo'se'f, Mister Dodge," he muttered, as he hurried down to where the two roads joined and entered the old thoroughfare. This point was well down the ridge, in a sharp

valley, the sides of which were covered with trees and undergrowth. He hid in the brush to await the enemy.

The sound of horses' hoofs warned him that the officers were approaching. He had no time to reconsider his plan. He only could think that his young master was less than half-a-mile away, that he could not now escape, and that humiliation, and perhaps insult, awaited his young mistress. He drew from his pocket the old revolver, and examined it carefully. It looked like an old and tried friend, although he never had shot it.

Miss Mary Lou quickly told her errand.

"And did you come alone, Little Sister?" asked Howard.

"No, Pleas stopped back at the forks to look for something or somebody," she answered.

"Well, Manning, shall we go home and face the music?"

"Surely! The bravery of Miss Mary Lou ought to give us courage to face the Devil, or all the devils in Kosciusko. I always knew this of Miss Mary Lou," answered Manning.

"Courage! She's the sweetest and bravest little sister in all the world," and Howard kissed again the white forehead and pressed her to his bosom. "Not another like her, Manning; God bless her."

"Hush, Howard, and talk about safety. You all must go away. Think of the disadvantage — think of their power and spite! They bear us a terrible grudge, and Uncle Felix says they have more power, now. Go to our uncle's in Arkansas until father has time to fix this up."

"No, Little Sister, not while you set us such an example," said Howard.

"Do hush about example; turn around right now and go ——"

But she did not finish the remonstrance; at that instant the sharp, loud report of a pistol rang out from down the road, followed quickly by a second, louder than the first; then unearthly yells, and a dozen shots — almost like a volley.

"Pleas!" gasped all in unison.

"Yes, it's Pleas. Go to him, Howard. Go Manning, I can mount alone," cried Mary Lou.

And the two young men were off in a trice, drawing from holsters the long duelling pistols that belonged in Major Lewis's mahogany case. Mary Lou followed closely, in spite of the appeals of Howard.

"Poor old Pleas! Faster, Howard, faster," she kept calling, forgetting, in her impatience, that Howard's horse was a war relic.

When they reached the forks of the road, there stood Pleas in the twilight, grinning over the body of a man in the dust. Two horses were in the throes of death.

"Jonas Smith!" cried Manning.

"Yas, Jonas Smith," echoed Pleas, laconically. "I tole yo', Jonas Smith, yo' git hu't, yo' keep pesterin' we-all. He hu't mighty bad, Mars Howard." And Pleas turned the prostrate form over on its back.

"You've killed him, Pleas!" cried Manning, as he felt for the pulse of the wounded man.

"Naw, I is n't kilt him," said Pleas, promptly. "I shot his hoss; I nerr kilt him."

"How did it happen, boy?" asked Howard.

"Dey ridin' down on yo'-all, an' I knowed dey 'rest yo', an' mebbe insult Miss Mary Lou. Dey won' now; Jonas Smith kilt, de res' runned 'way. I shot de hosses, Mars Howard, not Jonas Smith. I'd kilt err hoss dey rid 'fo' dey 'rest yo', Mars Howard."

"Who shot him, then?" asked Howard, impatiently.

"I doan know, Mars Howard; Pleas did n't," he answered, hurt that his word should be questioned, even in the face of such convicting circumstances.

"Pleas shall go with you, Howard. I can ride home alone," said Mary Lou.

"Never!" cried Howard, quickly. "Pleas must go; Manning and I will go home with you."

"Whar Pleas go at?" asked the negro.

"You must go to some place of safety until this is cleared up. They would hang you on sight."

"But these officers of the law are the friends of the negro!" said Manning, with a touch of sarcasm.

"Yes, we know all about that," answered Howard. "We will take no chances with their friendship." Then turning to Pleas, he continued: "Pleas, you must ride for your life. Go to our people in Arkansas; you know the way. Stay there until you hear from us. Have you any money, Manning?"

"Not very much, but Pleas shall have every cent there is in the party."

"I doan wan' to go!" persisted Pleas. "Doan

make me go, please, Mars Howard. Yo' an' Mister Mannin' go, an' lemme carry Miss Mary Lou home. Pleas carry de chile home so keerful! ”

“No, Pleas, you would be hanged,” said Howard.

“I doan keer; lemme go home, an' yo' an' Mister Mannin' run 'way.”

“No, Pleas,” said Howard, firmly.

“Pleas ain' no murder'; he d̄an hev no call to run 'way.” And the negro went down on his knees, begging and crying like a child.

There were others in the little party who wept; and when Howard had raised the black man to his feet, and had embraced him many times, he could speak but one word: “Go!”

XXII

IN WHICH HISTORY IS MADE

THE procession that moved from the forks of the road a few minutes after Pleas had disappeared in the darkness was not a cheerful nor a hopeful one. They knew not to what they were returning. The least they could expect was a cell in the dingy old jail; perhaps it was to meet a mob.

At first they had reckoned that their presence near the scene of the ambuscade would not be known, that Pleas alone would be charged with the crime. This was Howard's motive for banishing the negro. But on further consideration, they decided that they would have to answer for the killing.

As they started, Mary Lou asked: "What shall you do with the body?"

"It seems to be resting very comfortably where it is," answered Howard.

"Can not you carry it to Kosciusko? It seems brutal to leave the body of any human being in the dust like that."

"We've seen the bodies of more than ten thousand brave men left on one field. No, Little Sister, we can't bother with that scoundrel. We must get you home."

Twilight had deepened into darkness; the heavens had turned from gray to night-blue; and, far away through the dusk of the low-hanging vault,

the evening star had flashed its light. In the forest there was a perfect hush, which, after the bustle and pipe of its countless day-sounds, seemed oppressive. The darkness, the quiet of the wood, the reaction from her wild ride with its unexpected and tragic end, made a serious assault on the impressionable nature of Mary Lou. She rode in moody silence. Manning tried to throw off the spell by asking after the events of the afternoon, but she answered not a word. He then became thoughtful and speechless. Howard was calculating the probabilities of carrying his sister home without interruption, and was serious and mute. The desolate hoot of the owl, the threatening shriek of the night-hawk, and the plaintive whistle of the whippoorwill, alone broke the stillness.

When Howard was preparing to mount for this dreary ride, he stumbled over some object in the road, which on examination proved to be an old army musket. He struck a match; it had been discharged. Something impelled him to carry it.

Near midnight, as they approached Kosciusko, they saw a great hubbub ahead — more than a dozen horsemen with lanterns. They thought the hour of reckoning had come; but the whole party turned into a narrow dirt road that made a short cut from the Kosciusko pike to the one over which Mary Lou and Pleas had travelled during the afternoon. Evidently it was a rescuing party, sent out to meet and slaughter the ambuscade.

Howard watched the bobbing lights until the

last had gone, and calling to Manning, said: "We shall get into Kosciusko unmolested." He thought, furthermore, that with good luck to favor, they might carry Mary Lou home before they should be taken into custody. And this was their fortune; for when they reached the city, its streets were deserted, and they rode to Elmington as fast as their horses could go. Several problems now confronted them, and Manning went on home to bring Major Lewis to an early consultation.

Not the easiest matter to dispose of was Captain Avery's horse — how it could be returned without advertising to the local authorities that it had been ridden by Miss Mary Lou, and that, in all probability, it was at or near the scene of the ambush. This had been the source of great anxiety to her, and rose in her thoughts and speech above the danger to which her brother and friend were exposed. For she had not then considered the unhappy chain of circumstances that bound them; nor did she know the weak links in that chain, that, with a fair hearing, might clear them of all suspicion. She only knew that in a moment of pressure she had been induced to ask a friendly favor of the Captain, and that by an unfortunate turn in affairs her act might now compromise his official integrity.

This constituted the main topic at the early morning council at Elmington, and as time pressed, it was decided that Colonel Grayson should ride Pomp back to camp and deliver him up as quietly as possible to Captain Avery. All knew that excitement would run high in Kosci-

usko; that there was great danger to Manning and Howard from mob violence, unless time could be gained in which the unreasonable tales that were certain to be told by the survivors of the ambush, could be discredited. No one suggested flight. They should stay quietly at Elmington, await the course of events, and meet difficulties as they presented themselves.

Colonel Grayson only delayed starting with the horse to hear again the story of the night's adventure — this time from Manning. He wanted to be well fortified with facts before meeting the officers.

When he arrived in Kosciusko, there was great commotion in the streets. Groups of negroes were talking on every corner; members of the County Guards were riding madly about, large with authority, but small with knowledge of what to do; the troops were in line awaiting orders. In the confusion none seemed to notice him, and he rode into camp, where Avery sat equipped for action, as if expecting a call to preserve the peace.

"I wish you good-morning, Captain Avery. Allow me to return your horse with my sincerest gratitude for your kindness in lending him. I fear it may prove mistaken kindness, but we appreciate the act, nevertheless. When my daughter asked the unusual favor, she could not anticipate the horrible combination of circumstances that has overwhelmed us. As it was, she had some apprehensions — she is afraid to do anything in these times of conspiracies and intrigues — and would not have made the request if she had consulted me. She is prostrated with the

fear that her act, innocent as it was in purpose, may bring you into official censure."

"Tell her to have no fear for me," Avery answered, with perfect unconcern. "Take Pomp and ride to her at once and make her easy on my account. She shielded me fully in her note asking for the horse — your brother told her to do it."

"So she told me, although I do not plead that in her behalf," said Colonel Grayson.

"But I do. And more, I hunted him out early this morning, with a witness, and he did not dare to deny it. He is silenced. He did what he did on request of County officers. It was a part of a well-planned conspiracy, although the original scheme failed in the execution. They were after my official scalp; that was a part of the scheme. But affairs have so changed in one night that they are all scampering to save themselves. They undertook too much for one time. They ought to have left me out of their plans; that made their schemes top-heavy. If only the young men had not shot Jonas Smith, then there would have been no trouble."

"But they did not fire a shot; Howard, Manning and my daughter all declare it," answered the Colonel. "They heard the shots and came along to find Jonas Smith dead, and two horses dying in the road."

"They did not ambush Smith's posse? Well, I swear!" exclaimed Avery. "Another wheel within a wheel. These fellows will kill one another all off, yet. I wish I had known that sooner. But your son and Lewis will have to answer the charge."

"I expect nothing else, and can only ask for a fair hearing."

"Too much, I fear, when there are so many fellows trying to save themselves. But I will see that they don't organize and carry out a mob. They will attempt anything now that will keep the public mind occupied until they patch up their own blunders and cussedness."

"I thought there ought to be an autopsy on Smith's body—to see how and where he was shot," suggested Colonel Grayson.

"A good idea; I'll attend to it. Did the young gentlemen note anything peculiar about the shooting?"

"They said the first shot sounded like a pistol; the second louder, like a musket, and then came almost a volley. Howard picked up an old musket in the road; it had been discharged."

"Where is that musket?"

"Howard has it."

"Tell him to keep it. Zach Brassley carried one as they left here yesterday afternoon—I saw him," said Avery, with new confidence. "There is a whole lot to this business that we don't know. Please say to Miss Grayson that she did perfectly right to borrow Pomp; that I shall not be called to any account for lending him; that I'm glad she had him—glad for my own sake. I hope she stood the strain of last night's adventure, like the heroine she is."

"She went through the night well, but is badly shaken up by the reaction," answered Colonel Grayson, as he started for home.

No sooner was Colonel Grayson gone than

Avery set out to find Zack Brassley, who now was in command of the County Guards. He was chasing about lustily, stirring up commotion rather than seeking to restore quiet.

"Just one moment, Brassley," said the Captain. "There seems to be a good deal of excitement in town to-day, and perhaps not entirely without cause."

"Wall, I should say! The Rebels air 'bout t'take the country, ef I doan stop 'em. D' yo' hear 'bout las' night?"

"Yes, I am learning the true condition of things, not only for last night, but a great deal that will bear on the transactions of yesterday. I can tell you a whole lot that you think I don't know; and let me volunteer the advice, that you begin right now to restore quiet. This turmoil will lead to the organization of a mob. I have the troops ready for business, and I'll shoot down every person who connects himself with a riot, and I'll begin with those who stir the thing up."

"I doan wan' no mob. I'm tryin' to keep the ole town quiet," said Brassley.

"Now consider what I said," persisted Avery. "That old musket you carried out yesterday was found near the scene of the ambush, discharged. A mob will not cover the blunders and conspiracies of yesterday — don't think it will. I hold the key to the situation, for all the plotting to the contrary. If these young men lay in hiding and shot the sheriff, they shall be brought to trial — they will have to answer the charge anyway, but it will be in court. Now get your men out, go from place to place and send these people home."

Brassley started to make answer, but could do no more than stammer acquiescence; and knowing that he was beaten, took the Captain's advice and within half an hour every trace of disorder had disappeared from the streets. Later in the day, Howard Grayson and Manning Lewis came to town and after engaging the services of Colonel Hughley, the leading lawyer of the County, rode straight to the jail and placed themselves at the disposal of the constituted officers of the law. They were accommodated with a cell, and locked up on the charge of murder.

But Avery had not rested on his interview with Brassley. In answer to a telegram from him the division surgeon at Nashville came down on the afternoon train and made a post-mortem examination of the body of Jonas Smith. The report of this autopsy the doctor filed with Avery, as commanding officer of the post. This disposed of the case, except for a formal hearing before a magistrate; but it did not arrest the eager hand of the history-maker.

A newspaper correspondent in Kosciusko representing the "Washington Truth," the "New York Fact," and the "Chicago Honour," sent out a special telegram to each of his papers. The following day, thousands of readers in the North, who were anxious to know the truth concerning the conditions in the South, were shocked to read on the first page of one of these widely circulated and highly credited sheets:—

SOUTHERN OUTRAGE!!!

WAR NOT OVER!!

Officers of the Law Ambushed by Rebels!!

Ruffianly Outlaws Shoot from Cover and Kill a Faithful and Fearless Sheriff !

Great Excitement !! Loyal Citizens in arms to avenge the crime and protect themselves! An attack from Rebels momentarily expected !

Such is history !

The good people of the North, who had thought the war ended and peace restored, read and wondered. In some the blood boiled again ; others could not understand it; and many an old soldier who knew the newspaper man as a camp-follower, said, "A lie." But the correspondent of "Truth," "Fact," and "Honour," followed his meager telegraphic report with a long and detailed account of the dastardly affair; not forgetting to create for Miss Mary Lou Grayson a character as bold and bloodthirsty as his genius could contrive.

XXIII

SOME REASONABLE CONCLUSIONS

THE summer quickly passed, and the autumn brought its harvest of dry leaves and disappointed hopes. The drought continued without abatement until frost had blasted the few sickly products of sterile earth.

Howard Grayson and Manning Lewis remained in the fetid cell of the old jail. Their only comfort was a rug from the floor at Elmington. A bouquet of fresh flowers and some food, daintily prepared by Margaret Dodge and Mary Lou, were the daily ministrations of Mrs. Lewis and Mary Lou. Every effort to bring the charge of murder to a preliminary hearing was unavailing. The officers, whose duty it was to prosecute, and who talked often and loudly of the enormity of the crime, found convenient excuses for delay. Again the plain mandate of the Constitution and the one law common to all civilized people, requiring a speedy trial for those accused of and holden for crime, were set at naught.

The persecutions of late Confederates continued with relentless virulence. Scores were arrested and imprisoned, some on complaints of negroes who never prosecuted, for the negro had been made a half-citizen, and could appear as a witness; some on complaints from the Freedmen's Bureau, that never were substantiated; others by orders of the Provost-Marshall, that were wholly

groundless in law. Not one was convicted of a crime known to the penal code of any civilized country on the face of earth. The disheartened man on parole, with his starving family about him, bore patiently; he thought only of food for his loved ones. He only asked : "Give me a chance." If he complained, it was of the loss of time, not of the devastated condition of his affairs; this he regarded as the work of his own hands, or the chance of war.

In seeking relief he petitioned Congress, the President, the Governor, but could not break the silent contempt with which he had been treated since his case had passed beyond the hands of Grant, and since Lincoln was dead. Grant had been his friend, but now the generous conqueror was out of practical affairs. He had been placed on a pedestal, lest his magnanimity should interfere with the plans of the politicians. From this eminence he was allowed to descend once, and then he made a report that set the schemers quaking :—

" My observations lead me to the conclusion that the citizens of the Southern States are anxious to return to self-government within the Union as soon as possible; that while reconstructing they want and require protection from the Government; that they are in earnest in wishing to do what they think is required by the Government, not humiliating to them as citizens; and that if such a course were pointed out they would pursue it in good faith. It is to be regretted that there can not be a greater commingling at this time between the citizens of the two sections,

and particularly those intrusted with the law-making power."

An election was held meantime, but the Southern white man remained at home with his work; he was not wanted at the polls. The Federal soldiers, residents of other States and Canada, exercised without question the glorious privilege of citizenship. The returns of this election showed the choice of one Abner Johnson, a just man of conservative views, for member of Congress; but the State Administration preferred to honor another and more radical candidate. Accordingly, Wisdom and Supremacy sitting at Nashville threw out two thousand votes that had been cast for Mr. Johnson, giving the minority candidate a large majority. This was the first example of "returning-board" count the South had ever seen.

Winter came with new and added miseries—cold, hunger, destitution. Those who had whereof to eat, divided with their less fortunate neighbors until there was little left, and starvation threatened whole communities. And with all this, the greedy maw of revenge was not sated.

But those who had divided the food, and those who had lived thereby, drew closer together. Then, too, they were encircled by the bond of common suffering at the hands of the officers. More than ever before, and by force of conditions, the people of the South were a peculiar and a separate people. To this time they had not thought of defence or retaliation, only of endurance. They had hoped that their sincerity of purpose would bring them relief and quiet; that

dignified submission would soon be recognized and appreciated at Washington; that the counsels of Grant and Thomas would prevail.

Spring came early. It brought a promising smile to nature and begat new hope in despairing man. Again he was in the field, plowing and planting. Driven by the direst necessity, beckoned by the hope that is born of spring-time, he worked from early morning until late evening.

But there were other sufferers whose misfortunes added their load to his. The severe winter, with the wretched shelter of the improvised freedmen's city, had caused great distress among the negroes huddled together at Kosciusko, under the protecting wing of the Government. Old slaves that were like members of the Southern man's family, were hungry and sick. This widely heralded blessing, the Freedmen's Bureau, had spread disease and misery amongst the people who were thought by the outside world to be infinitely benefited. They died off like poor sheep in a backward spring. The food distributed by a parental Government was furnished by favored contractors, and was handed out by political agents. Between these two evils, the poor black man did well to survive his benefactions. He became alarmed at the constant presence of death, and would have returned to his cabin on the plantation but for the restraining and enlightening influence of the Union League. In this educational institution he learned that his old master was the direct cause of the sufferings then being visited upon him and his family.

But with the first warm sun of spring hundreds

broke away and wandered sheepishly back to their old places, begging that the old ties of master and man be again restored. None were turned away; some were hired at monthly wages, others for a share of the crop. These contracts were ratified by the Freedmen's Bureau, although with a tedious regard for red-tape methods that savored of reluctance. Not only did the officers of the Bureau ratify these contracts, but they retained them for future reference and use.

And there was yet no clash between the gentleman of the South and his late slave. But the Union League continued its meetings. It despaired not, and lost not heart. It had other expedients that would be tried in good time. For the present, the negro was being taught the use of the musket. His lively fancy foresaw for himself glory in the field of arms. Not only had he a musket, but if he had not traded off the old army revolver given to him the summer before, he now was doubly armed. Those in whom the martial spirit surged and swelled, returned not to the plantations. They lounged by day, dreaming on the glories of conquest, and at night took on fresh inspiration at the League.

And the maker of history, the mighty man of newspaper space, had not slumbered. Each unfortunate that was brought before the court or cast unheard into jail or prison, furnished a column of terrible warning to the good people of the North. No odds how silly or senseless the charge, how vicious or humiliating the punishment, or how patient and dignified the conduct of the victim, it all made to the one conclusion:

"The war is not ended." This creature came and went of his own free will, and was often a guest of the people whom he maligned.

The advent of spring brought another innovation—large numbers of people were immigrating from the North. They were well received. Every Southern home was open, and such as the poor people had was cheerfully divided. A few Federal soldiers who had marched through Middle Tennessee with Thomas came in, and to them every hospitality was extended. The Confederate and Federal soldier met in fraternal greetings, and bartered yarns as they had exchanged tobacco for coffee over trenches during the lull of battle. But the civilian immigrant was shy; he showed the mould of the history-maker.

Some bought land, or sought to do so, but the people of the South clung to their old homes with the same desperation that characterized their life at this time. Few plantations were for sale. Others rented land from the Government, held under the "Abandoned Lands Act." Another class set up in towns as land agents.

An era of prosperity, new and unknown to this Section, was promised, and was not unwelcomed. The people had been reared to be content with the rotation of seasons, and the natural sequence of events; but now they were worn out with persecutions, and saw in the opening of commercial and industrial activity, a return of peace and quiet. They thought: "If men are occupied with business affairs, they will forget their malice."

A conclusion hopeful, and natural, but how disappointing!

XXIV

THE MEN WITH CARPET-BAGS

THE recognition, at first so puny and peevish, that Congress had accorded the local Government, had grown by little and little as the relations between the National and State parties took form. The professions of loyalty to any project, however monstrous, on the part of the latter were sincere, and their pledges were almost fulfilled — the only failure came by mistake. It was on the subject of negro enfranchisement.

In a moment of impulse, the representatives of the local Government, in mass convention assembled, resolved, by an overwhelming majority, that the black man should not vote; and more, that no man who favored negro citizenship should be supported in Tennessee for Congress. Here they came near splitting; or rather the National party had the State party in mid-air, and was about to cast it overboard. But a lurch in the grand old Ship of State called attention to another quarter for a little time, giving the local authorities a moment in which to prostrate themselves and cry: "We didn't know that was wrong; do tell us what you want!" And thus the matter was patched; the only penalty exacted was the relegation to political oblivion of those who had led in the unfortunate expression of honest sentiment in the mass convention.

After this incident all went well. The party

in Tennessee sought instructions in patriotism before assembling to pass resolutions. These instructions not only kept the politicians charged with a superior quality of love for the undivided Union, but put them in touch with the broader policy of the National party. From this association the State authorities, from Simon, Governor, down to Brassley, Sheriff, had learned, before the time at which this history has arrived, that with the hatred of treason could be coupled the love of gain; that the greed for vengeance and the greed for gold could join company without prejudice to either virtue.

Little gold was left, all had gone to the altar of Conviction — the most sweeping sacrifice of personal interest to political principles the world has ever seen. But that little gold was wanted. The National party had plans; the National party was practical. It had political reckonings to pay. Leaders had henchmen to be provided for, and the creation of new offices meant new jobs.

The introduction of this business feature into the occupation of the officials called for a complete readjustment of their methods, lest the original purpose of humiliation and persecution should be overlooked. The native Tennessean, who, up to this time, had arrayed himself with the dominant party, was wholly incapable of harboring at once two designs. His life and training were uncommercial; he had neither tact nor capacity for turning a dollar. Useful as he had been, he was inadequate to the growing needs.

So, not only was a revision of plans necessary, but new blood was essential to the successful and

profitable execution of these plans. Again note the leading hand of foreordination! The volunteers for this vicarious transfusion sprang up on every side; they were on the ground; they had been beckoned by an unseen hand to the South, and every nook and corner of the unfortunate Section had its complement of ready martyrs. They were the adventurous immigrants, who, scorning the admonitions of the newspaper correspondents, had gone South to face rebellion, after the Rebel had taken to the plow. Nothing short of predestination, or a friendly hint from some politician, could have guided them; the country was waste, trade was dead, society was disorganized, starvation was rampant.

Without loss of time offices were filled from their tattered ranks, for most of them wore evidences of pecuniary misfortune. The prosperity of the North during the war had not been suited to their talents—they had failed, one and all; and, frayed and threadbare from the scramble for bread, they were now looking for an occupation devoid of the vulgarity of competition. As was often said in those days, they wanted a “sure thing.”

In most cases the visible possession of these unseemly immigrants was a travelling-bag, made from carpet, with ugly designs wrought into its rough surface; and often its lank and flabby sides disclosed a wealth of unoccupied space within.

Little wonder that the people of the South, when they saw this horde of hand-bags come bulging into their midst, revived an old nickname and called these immigrants, “Carpet-Baggers.”

True, these men were Yankees, but all Yankees did not carry carpet-sacks, nor did all Yankees bear the distinguishing characteristics that marked these men. They were a type, both in mould of mind and bodily feature. To know one, was to possess the ability to recognize his fellow on first sight and at long range.

One of the most striking peculiarities of this crowd was their voluble sociability. They all loved to talk; some excelled in private conversation, while others shone in theoretical discourse, in which stupendous projects were easily handled. They all seemed gifted with great words for public haranguing. And whether the conversation or harangue turned into politics, religion, science, perpetual motion, preaching, lightning-rods, or book agency, there was coupled to a glibness of tongue a patronizing quality of manner that with some audiences carried conviction.

Each and every one carried a burning thirst for an audience, and this affliction early brought the Carpet-Baggers into inharmonious social relations with the men of the South. The latter were too busy with rebuilding to stop and listen to finely spun theories. They had suddenly become practical. Accordingly, the immigrants had recourse to their grips and pass-words, and entered the Union League.

Here was their logical abiding-place, a real Promised Land. The negroes never tired of their interminable and inscrutable talking, and applauded and got the "power" at the climax of every discourse. Many of the Carpet-Baggers had gone South on the mission of enlightening

their black brother, but once there, had yielded to the allurements of a social ambition never before gratified. But this ambition was of short life, and they early found their social level with the men whom they had intended to evangelize.

The boundaries of their political mission were less definite; for with the expanding policy of the party in power, the line seemed, each succeeding day, to be more and more remote.

Such is the genesis of the Carpet-Baggers, and whether their origin be one to call up pride or shame, they were factors in events, and left their imprint on American history.

XXV

A BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

GOOD-MORNING, my dear colored brother; this is a fine morning," said a man in rusty clerical habit to Uncle Phil, as he stood at the entrance to Elmington.

"Tol'able; yas, suh."

"I am looking for a man by the name of Grayson; is this his place, good brother?"

"Dis am Cunnel Grayson's plantation, suh; but I doan 'low as I is yo' br'er," answered the old negro.

"Yes, yes, you are; we are brothers. I am the friend and brother of all colored gentlemen. Is this Colonel, as you call him, at home to-day?"

"Yas, suh!" said Uncle Phil, regarding the new arrival with a look of terror, for the man was afflicted with a nervous disorder that caused his face to twitch and wrinkle outrageously. Uncle Phil thought him possessed of the Devil.

The man rode up to the house, and finding Colonel Grayson in the front yard at work, drew up his horse and after his face had puckered itself a minute, introduced himself.

"I am the Rev. Joshua Streeter, late of Wisconsin. I left a lucrative field and a large congregation up there, to come down and cast my lot with the good people of Tennessee. I wanted to do some good; wanted to convert the colored

people and take them out of the darkness of ignorance and superstition. But that's a big job, Mister; a pretty big job. Your folks showed their appreciation of the sacrifice I made, by appointing me sheriff of this county—Wilson—or Warren, oh, yes, thanks, Williams County, and Captain of the County Guards."

"I am glad to know you, Mr. Streeter," answered the Colonel. "Won't you get down and come into the house?"

"No, thanks; can't stay. As I was saying about this appointment, it was an unexpected honor; but your folks said they wanted a business administration, and really made me take the place. I thought I could combine business and philanthropy. Well, I started in yesterday to organize things. I found a terrible state of affairs, no head to anything. This morning I went through the jail, to kind of get acquainted with my boarders. There are some nice men in that old place—some real gentlemen. I found two young men, charged with a serious crime—murder. One of them is your boy, I believe?"

"My son is in your jail, so accused, Mr. Streeter," answered Colonel Grayson.

"A serious matter; a strong case, too, so I hear. Sad, for you seem like a nice man, and the boys appear to be rather decent. Too bad to hang such young men," said the new sheriff, with sympathy showing through the kaleidoscopic wrinkles of his face. "And the very moment I saw them, said I to myself, 'something ought to be done to save them, and you, Joshua Streeter, are the very man to do it.' "

"I know of nothing to be done, except to bring the case on for trial," answered Colonel Grayson, with perfect composure.

"That is the worst thing in the world; the very worst. The proof against them seems to be overwhelming. It ought to be fixed up, Mr. Grayson."

"I know nothing about 'fixing up,' as you call it. My son and his friend have tried by every honorable means to get a hearing. That is all we ask now."

"Sure to hang, Mr. Grayson. It's a very serious case. Let me suggest that you and I arrange to get the case dismissed. Let me tell you, my friend, a dozen of the County Guards will swear straight against the boys. Don't speak of a trial; I'll do anything I can to help you get the matter out of court. That's your way."

"I have proposed the only remedy we know here in the South: A fair trial. Now, as a matter of information, what do you suggest?" asked Colonel Grayson, who more than suspected the mission of the sheriff.

"Well, Mr. Grayson, I've been a philanthropist all my life—I've worked in the vineyard of the Lord for these twenty years, and don't believe in harsh measures. I don't want to hang those boys; and if they are convicted, as sheriff, I'd have to do it. They seem to be fairly nice boys, and I can save them, my friend; at least, I'm willing to try. The folks down here honored me before I had been thirty days in the State, and I want to show to them that Joshua Streeter appreciates an honor. I want to do

some good; that's been my work for going on twenty years." And he added, in a very confidential manner: "I tell you, it can be fixed up, my friend."

"How?" asked Colonel Grayson, still seeking direct information.

"Oh,—on the payment of some money to the right parties, I guess; don't know exactly; but I guess so," said the sheriff, with some embarrassment and much wriggling of features.

"Why should I pay money?"

"To get rid of the whole thing. You can better pay certain parties, than lawyer's fees. Then, if we fix it up, you do away with certain conviction—the boys go scot free, if we succeed."

"On your suggestion, let me ask, what amount would I have to pay? I enquire for information."

"Oh, oh—something like five hundred dollars, if we succeed in fixing the matter."

"In other words, I am asked to bribe officers of the law?"

"No, not a bribe, exactly. Call it costs."

"Now, Mr. Streeter, my son tells me, and I never knew him to speak an untruth, that he has committed no crime. And more, if the case comes to trial, we have evidence that will send the County Guards scurrying to save themselves. We stand for a trial," said the Colonel, sternly.

"Oh, you misunderstand me. If five hundred is too steep, maybe four hundred are nearer your circumstances?" persisted the philanthropist.

"Not a cent! My son is not a criminal; I shall not become one to save him a trial."

"It's a clean business transaction, my friend. No crime to save those boys; perhaps you can raise a hundred?"

"Not one cent," said the Colonel, with as much impatience as he ever displayed. "Allow me to bid you good-morning, Mr. Streeter." And Colonel Grayson started for the house, leaving the sheriff amazed at the outlook for the first proposition under his business administration.

"It's a clean business proposition, Mr. Grayson, perfectly clean. I want to save the boys, my friend; I don't want to hang them. Just for costs; no bribe, understand. Better think it over, my friend ——" But Colonel Grayson had gone into the house and shut the door behind him. The preacher was not abashed, only astonished at the lack of Colonel Grayson's perception. The disdain with which the latter treated an offer so plainly advantageous, was beyond the experience and conception of the newly-made sheriff, and set him to thinking seriously. He turned his horse and rode slowly down toward the pike, ruminating: "What ails these folks; hain't they got any business sense? Five hundred dollars in sight ten minutes ago, and not a cent in the contribution box now. Well, there are other ways to make them shell out."

Near the gate he met Uncle Phil, and stopping his horse, said: "My dear colored brother, do you work for this man?"

"I lives hyear, but I doan wuck t' hu't," answered the old negro.

"Have you a contract signed by the Freedmen's Bureau?"

"Naw, suh, I's got nerr cont'act with nobody. Cunnel Grayson, he my ole marster; I doan wan' no cont'act."

"Then this man is your master, is he?" persisted Sheriff Streeter.

"Yas, suh."

"Have you been with your master to the Freedmen's Bureau?"

"Naw, suh. We hev nuttin t' do with no Bureau."

"Thank you, my friend and brother." And the sheriff rode away.

That very afternoon Zack Brassley and two other members of the County Guards came to Elmington with a warrant and arrested Colonel Grayson and carried off Uncle Phil as a witness. The new officer did not participate in the execution of this mandate; he was the business head of the department. But when the prisoner was brought before his honor, N. Lex Witan, Sheriff Streeter was present as witness and prosecutor.

The case was immediately called, and the magistrate read the complaint.

"May it please the court," said Colonel Grayson, with as much courtesy as he would have shown in addressing the Supreme Court of the land, "that does not explain how I am brought here by force and arms to answer this remarkable charge. This negro man, Uncle Phil, my life-long friend, is not in my employ. He has not done a day's work under my direction for above thirty years."

"He is on your premises, and I suppose at work; at least he told me you were his employer."

"I say Cunnel Grayson war my ole marster, suh!" Uncle Phil cut in, bristling with indignation.

"Perhaps I misunderstood you, my brother," said the preacher-sheriff, smoothly. "I certainly did not intend to misquote you, my friend."

"Yo' air no br'er mine, an' I tole yo' so dis mawnin,'" answered Uncle Phil, sharply.

"Do you work for this man?" asked the sheriff, pointing to Colonel Grayson.

"Naw, suh, I doan wuck fo' no pusson."

"Don't work, hey? How do you live?" asked the sheriff.

"I wuck for de Lawd, suh. I is a preacher of de Gospil," answered Uncle Phil, with functional reverence, and especial emphasis on the last syllable of "Gospil."

"Ah, I see; yes, dear brother, 'The Lord is mindful of his own,' and will provide," said the sheriff, although his own appearance discredited either his calling or his statement.

"And Uncle Phil's friends make up the balance," put in Colonel Grayson.

"This is a remarkable case, indeed. Tell me about it, won't you, Mister — ?" asked the sheriff, of Colonel Grayson.

"With pleasure, sir; but first permit me to correct your pronunciation of my name. It is Grayson, Rodeny Grayson, sir; not 'Mister.' There is little to add to what Uncle Phil has said. He has a good tract of land, in the middle of which stands a more than comfortable frame cottage of two rooms. Here he reigns supreme
_____"

"Doan fo'git Manda, Mars Rodeny," put in the negro.

"Oh, yes, except for Aunt Manda, his wife. They make a garden, raise a pig or two — "

"But de Yankee sojers stole 'em," broke in Uncle Phil.

"And some chickens — "

"Dey stole dem, too," interrupted Uncle Phil.

"And what they need beyond that," continued Colonel Grayson, "comes to the good old people from their friends."

"Emm, emm, yes, yes; evidently we have made a mistake," said the sheriff, looking at the magistrate. "Guess, your honorable court, we shall have to dismiss, upon payment of cost; although there is not quite sufficient proof to warrant the conclusion that there should not be a contract."

"Yas, I think, in reason, I will dismiss the case, if Cunnel Grayson will pay the cost," said the magistrate.

"Is it usual for the defendant who has been found 'not guilty,' to pay the cost?" asked Colonel Grayson.

"Yo're not found 'not guilty,' Cunnel; not by a jugful. Hit's 'bout half an' half; so, in reason, yo' oughter pay cost; an' that is the decree of this Cote," and the justice gave force to his decision with a whack of his fist on the desk. Streeter folded his arms and looked terrible.

"If I am guilty, I await the sentence of this Court. What is my sentence?" asked Colonel Grayson, calmly.

"Thet am the decree of this Cote; yo' pay the cost," answered the justice, with labored deliberation.

"At what do you tax costs, sir?"

The sheriff and the magistrate held a whispered consultation, after which the latter straightened up and looked terrible, as he said: "'Bout ten dollars, Cunnel."

These new officers never were certain about amounts; they worked to a sliding scale.

"Give me a receipt, please," said Colonel Grayson, as he paid the money. Streeter gathered in the coin and wrote a hasty receipt.

"Thank you," said Colonel Grayson, taking the written paper, "Now, Uncle Phil, we will go home, I reckon."

"Just one minute, Mister —— Grayson. Did you say that this colored brother is married?" asked the sheriff, as they started to leave the court room.

"He is married."

"Legally married?" asked the sheriff.

"I reckon so," answered Colonel Grayson. "The ceremony was performed in my parlor by a regular clergyman, the rector of the Episcopal parish in which I live. There were a large number of guests; my friend, Major Lewis, and myself were witnesses on the certificate. I gave the bride away in good orthodox fashion."

"Was a license procured?" asked Streeter.

"I think not, sir. That was not our custom for negro marriages."

"Then it was not a valid marriage, and we can not recognize it," declared the sheriff, with a look

at Squire Witan. "Do you understand, my friend and brother," he continued, addressing Uncle Phil, "these white folks down here have fooled you. You were not lawfully married. You are an adulterer—an immoral man, and all because these white folks have deceived you
_____"

"Stop, sir," exclaimed Colonel Grayson, in a voice that caused the baggy knees of the adventurer to strike together. "Do you charge me with having deceived this good man, who has been my personal friend for fifty years?"

"No, no, I mis-spoke! I take it back, Mister —— Grayson," whined the sheriff, seeking shelter behind the magistrate's desk. "In my zeal, I went too far; excuse me, please."

"That ceremony was performed thirty years ago. Do you question the legality of it?"

"Yo' will hev to get a license, Cunnel, or we will commit the nigger," explained the Court.

"May I ask if you know the current price on marriage licenses?"

"The new clerk sells 'em fo' 'bout six dollars fo' whites, an' fo' dollars fo' niggers," answered Witan.

"Well, Uncle Phil, we will get a license."

"Better have the marriage performed at the Freedmen's Bureau, Mister —— Grayson," put in the sheriff, as the last counsel.

Uncle Phil and Colonel Grayson went to the office of County Clerk, paid the immigrant, a retired book-agent from Michigan, four dollars for a license and then repaired to the Freedmen's Bureau.

"We will have no mistake this time, Uncle Phil," said the Colonel. "Business comes easy under the new administration, if one has a plenty of money."

At the Bureau, Colonel Grayson asked for his brother Felix. The parson was there, very busy with papers, but listened to the story of Uncle Phil's crime.

"You need not bring Aunt Manda in," said he, "I know it's all right. I'll fill out a certificate and sign it as preacher; I've a preacher's license. I'll do all I can for you, Brother Rodeny. If I had to go out to Elmington, I'd have to charge you ten dollars; but for this certificate — well, I'll be easy on Uncle Phil; I'll charge him only five dollars."

Colonel Grayson counted the money he had left and could find only three dollars and a quarter.

"Never mind the certificate, Felix; I don't seem to have enough money," he said, quietly.

"Oh, that's all right, Brother Rodeny," said Felix, grasping the currency in sight. "I'll let Uncle Phil off with that; he's a sort of a preacher, and I'll be easy on him. He's a good old man; has done me a hundred favors; and, if I remember right, spanked me once when I was an urchin. Glad to do you a service, Brother Rodeny; call on me often."

And Colonel Grayson pocketed the paper; it certified that Felix Grayson, Minister of the Gospel, had that day married Phil Grayson, aged eighty years, and Manda Grayson, aged seventy-nine years, in the presence of John Smith and Joseph Johnson, witnesses. Armed with this

valuable document, they went thoughtfully home. The exhibition of power seen that day caused Colonel Grayson some anxiety for the outcome of a trial of his son and Manning Lewis.

Uncle Phil was disposed to discuss events, but his master refused to talk, more than to say: "You now see who your friends are, Uncle Phil. Mr. Streeter told you many times that he was your friend and brother."

"He ain' no kin of mine. Naw, suh, Mars Rodeny; an' no frien', nurr. I jes' wish Manda hev been thar!" And the old man chuckled to himself.

XXVI

WHEN ROGUES FALL OUT

DURING the months of the incarceration of Howard Grayson and Manning Lewis, Captain Avery had been a regular visitor at Elmington. He was more than attentive; he had made frequent offers of special services, and had quietly volunteered to Colonel Grayson much advice in the young men's case. But all this could not change the attitude of Mary Lou. She constantly bantered him about his politics, and at times commented on the peculiarities of his official associates in a way that touched his pride. He was utterly unable to discover his place in her estimation; he never once felt that he had a standing that warranted a declaration of love; yet so cordial and hearty was his welcome, that he never for a moment lost hope. He knew that Colonel Grayson was his friend — there was abundant evidence of that; he hoped that Mary Lou was more than a friend, yet he lacked the courage to break through the uncertainty and face the hidden fact.

Not only did Avery call at Elmington with constancy, but he made quite frequent visits to the young gentlemen in the old jail. But in his display of sympathy he was much more discreet than he had been on the exciting day that followed the shooting of Jonas Smith. Then his own official position had been plotted against; he

was personally interested to discover and hold all possible evidence that would place the County Guards under his power.

In fact, a change had come over the feelings of Captain Avery since his meeting with Manning Lewis at the Bluff. When he tore to shreds and burned the resignation he had written under the press of impulse, his attitude toward the people he met, except the Graysons and Lewises, was completely altered. His conduct became more studied, less spontaneous; he suddenly became conciliatory toward the Federal officers, although he still heartily detested them. With the advent of the men with carpet-bags, he even found some associates. Distasteful as they were, he felt more at ease with them than he did with the cordial, genial gentlemen of the South. In company with the Carpet-Baggers, he was not embarrassed by a feeling of responsibility for the insults and humiliations that were daily heaped upon the Southern people.

The idea of leaving the army to become a citizen of Tennessee had gone up with the smoke of his burning resignation. The Captain seemed to think that his proposed renunciation of political faith and associations had not received sufficient encouragement. Mary Lou, especially, had not rejoiced over his abjuration in the gracious and condescending manner that he had hoped she would. Others to whom he had confided his rash purpose, expressed a welcome as cordial as he could have desired; but none seemed to regard it as a matter of life and death to the South.

Now he was often in consultation with Felix

Grayson; and Joshua Streeter, the new sheriff, advised with him on nearly every important measure. It so happened that the day after Streeter had made advances to Colonel Grayson for the release of the young gentlemen, he called on Avery and related to him the whole conversation.

"Now, Streeter," said Avery, who not only had plans of his own, but saw a long-wished-for opportunity to create an obligation, "you'd better not push that case to trial. I know all about it; too much for the good of the County Guards. Those young fellows have evidence that you can't get around with all the witnesses in Christendom. Instead of hanging two Rebels, you'll lose some of your Guards. Old Colonel Grayson can't be worked for a cent, that's certain. It's a nasty business, and the sooner you are out of it, the better."

"Seems as if we ought to get some fees out of it," persisted the sheriff, working his face.

"If you knew what I know, you would be glad to let go without having any questions asked. I will see Colonel Grayson and hush the thing up, and you arrange to let the fellows out to-morrow."

"As you think best, Brother Avery; only we ought to get some money; a business administration, you know," said the sheriff, twisting his face into hideous wrinkles.

"Never mind fees,— save the administration," said Avery.

Later in the day, Streeter recounted his experience with Colonel Grayson, to Felix.

"You don't know how to manage these people,

Brother Streeter," was Felix's reply. "I was born at Elmington and know just how to touch every man in this country. Too bad, Brother Streeter, I fear you've spoiled the whole thing. I'll drive out this evening and see Brother Rodeny. I will present the case right. He will see at a glance that we have witnesses, court and jury; perhaps I can pull the scheme through."

"But Captain Avery thinks we have a rather poor case."

"Oh, Avery is trying to court my brother's foster-daughter; he has been against us all along. Don't blame him for courting — she is the prettiest girl in Tennessee — but business is business. There are some things in the case that are hard to explain, but the young fellows don't know of them. I'll fix it, Brother Streeter, and we will attend to the fees. Who'll be in the divide?"

"The sheriff, the clerk, the Provost-Marshal and one or two others," answered Streeter, with horrible grimaces.

"Who are the others?" asked Felix.

"The agent of the Bureau."

"And the Judge?"

"I suppose he is entitled to something."

"The Attorney-General?"

"Yes."

"And myself?"

"Certainly, Brother Grayson," answered the sheriff.

"I will try and earn my share," said Felix, and he ordered his carriage.

Streeter went direct from this conversation to Avery's headquarters, intending to delay the

Captain until Felix Grayson should have an opportunity to report. But when he arrived at Avery's tent he was told that the Captain had gone out for a ride, as was his custom of a pleasant afternoon. Returning quickly to the Freedmen's Bureau he found that Felix had driven away during his absence. Evidently his plans were in danger of going awry. He stood still for several minutes, and the features of his face did awful execution.

When Felix drove up to his brother's house that afternoon, he found Mary Lou, Colonel Grayson, and Avery upon the front porch. A chair was brought for the young parson and he was asked to join the circle.

"Thanks, Brother Rodeny. This is the most hospitable roof in America; hospitality has descended in this house from generation to generation, until it permeates every nook and corner. Is that poetic enough for you, Mary Lou?" said Felix, in his best mood.

"Very pretty, Uncle Felix," she answered, "but, as the newspapers are saying: 'Important, if true.'"

"Oh, it's true, easy enough; I was born here and know all about it," he replied. "But why do you persist in calling me 'Uncle?'" Am I so very old?"

"No, not so venerable; but you are father's brother. That surely is no fault of mine, Uncle Felix."

"But I don't like it, Mary Lou. I'd rather be your friend than your uncle," he said, somewhat nettled by her indifference.

"Now, would n't you like to be both?" she asked, with tantalizing sweetness.

"I don't like to be uncle."

"Sure-enough?"

"Yes, sure-enough."

"Well, Mr. Grayson, if the relationship annoys you, I won't advertise it — unless I forget," she said, with exaggerated seriousness.

"You are an awful tease; you know I am proud of my connection with this family," said Felix. Then turning to Colonel Grayson, he continued: "Having again settled this old quarrel with Mary Lou, I have a matter of interest to suggest to you. You need not withdraw, Captain Avery; you are a good friend to our family. I refer to getting Howard and young Lewis out of their trouble. I don't care for Lewis, he is a rather wild and irreligious fellow, but I have worried about Howard these months; and never, until Brother Streeter was made sheriff, have I seen my way to be of any service to you. As I have often said to you, there is, or has been, a conflict between State and Federal authority. Captain Avery and I belong to the latter; the boys are under the jurisdiction of the former. You see my position. Now Streeter is a very reasonable man; a good and devout man. He don't want to do anything wrong. I have some influence with him; he will listen to me. I talked the case over with him a long time this morning, and finally he got sense. He will do the right thing; at least, he is willing to try to help the boys. Would n't you like to have Howard home, Mary Lou?"

"Surely, when he is honorably discharged, U——," but she saved herself the full "Uncle."

"It can be done to-morrow," said Felix, eagerly. "To drive Howard, a free man, out here for dinner to-morrow would be the proudest act of my life. I will contribute a bouquet of flowers for the table! Would n't that be a festival occasion, Captain? Howard free! honorably discharged ! What say you, Brother Rodeny ? "

"You know the Grayson pride too well to ask," said Colonel Grayson, in a non-committal manner, for he had not yet heard the conditions.

"Some costs have been made which the officers demand shall be paid — a mere trifle — but they will have to be paid, nevertheless. Of course you don't mind that, so long as Howard goes free ? "

"Pardon me, Felix, but I do mind," answered Colonel Grayson, quickly.

"He will be honorably discharged; he will be fully acquitted; I would suggest nothing else," said Felix.

"To the world, yes; to me, no. Your man, Streeter, was here yesterday and proposed a bribe; with courtesy that I can not remember ever before to have shown any person, I walked off and left him sitting out there in the yard and went into the house to tell Mary Lou that the turnip-greens were big enough to pull."

"Indeed ! was Streeter here ? " asked Felix, with great surprise. "Strange he did n't tell me about it. Well, well, you decline to pay the costs ? But, Brother Rodeny, these fellows have witnesses, jury and court, all against the boys."

"As I told Mr. Streeter, 'a fair trial is all we ask,'" said Colonel Grayson, firmly.

"The costs are but a trifle, Brother Rodeny."

"Not a cent, Felix," said Colonel Grayson, quietly.

"Well, this beats me; but I shall keep right on at work for Howard's release," said Felix. "I would n't mind paying the costs myself, if Mary Lou would ask me to do so." And the parson cast an enquiring look at the young lady.

"Father speaks for the family, U——"

"Not one penny from anybody, on such an account," said Colonel Grayson, in his quiet, pleasant manner.

"Five o'clock! I must be going," said Felix, consulting his watch. "What do you think of the case against the boys, Captain Avery?" asked Felix, rising to take his leave.

"I have no opinion to express at this time," said Avery, who could scarcely conceal his disgust.

After Felix had driven away, the Captain was silent for some minutes, but when he arose to go, he said: "I think this matter can be arranged without any payment of costs or bribe, as I told you before Mr. Grayson came. Of course we don't know what deviltry they have hatched up since I left town; but I will do my best, and will let you know results to-morrow, Miss Mary Lou, when you visit your brother and friend."

"Thank you, very, very much, Captain Avery," said Mary Lou.

The next morning Mary Lou rode Howard's old war horse to Kosciusko and carried her basket of delicacies, the work of her own hands, for Howard

and his fellow prisoner. Through all these weary months, she had not once failed, for rain or shine. At the door of the jail she was denied admittance, and when she sought to establish her right to see her brother, the negro jailer cut her off rudely: "Naw, yo' caint git in hyear. No mo' foolisherness — dems o'ders from de she'ff, an' o'ders is o'ders, as Cap'n Smith useter say."

"May I see the sheriff, please?" she asked.

"Naw! De she'ff done gone 'way an' lef' dem o'ders. Yo' caint see 'im, I tells yo'."

"Will you please to carry this basket of food to my brother?" she asked, almost pleadingly.

"Naw, mum; I haint got no o'ders."

The insolence of the negro was unbearable; and to add to it, some black loafers wearing old Federal uniforms, standing about the jail, laughed boisterously at her embarrassment. "She nerr seen 'em," said one, in a rough voice; another bawled out: "Bottom rail on de top of de fence." Evidently they had been posted there to annoy her.

This resolute girl never before had felt so utterly helpless. Her brother in jail; her father at home, three miles away; not a friend in the world available to lend her a hand. And most of all, her brother was at that moment hungry, for he could not eat the putrid food given to the prisoners. She could have smiled on the insults, if Howard and Manning had had the contents of her basket. She dared not go to Felix; she could not appeal to Avery. The sense of desolation, the feeling of helplessness, the insults of the hired loafers, the disappointment at leaving

her brother without food, overcame her; with tears streaming down her cheeks she mounted the old horse and turned toward home. She had hoped, and not without good cause, that Howard and Manning would be free; but instead she had been denied the poor privilege of seeing them or feeding them. For once she was unable to control her feelings; and as she rode away, weeping passionately, the negroes shouted in derision.

Two blocks from the jail she met Avery; she had not seen him through her blinding tears until he called "whoa" to her horse. Instantly she sat erect, and dashing the tears from her eyes, smiled a pleasant good-morning.

"Ah, Miss Grayson, what is the matter? What has happened?"

"Nothing, Captain Avery; only——only——" and her voice broke and she wept anew.

"What is it, please; do tell me," he cried, and in his excitement he drew his sword from its scabbard. "Oh, I can guess! Those damned scoundrels have refused to let you see your brother. Pardon my language—I forgot your presence. Come back, please, I will attend to this matter myself."

"Thank you, Captain Avery, I can not go back there now — those negroes were so rough; I will go for father and we will return directly."

"But can't I be of service? Do let me help you! What can I do?" he asked, eagerly.

Her face brightened, and smiling through her tears she said: "Nothing, thank you very much, only do not look at me with such splendid commiseration in your face. I really have not

deserved such grand sympathy, for I have been a baby these last few minutes. But Howard is hungry, right now, and I have his breakfast, dinner and supper in this basket. You can do him a friendly service by carrying it to him ? ”

“ Is that all ? Can’t I do something for you ? ”

“ Yes, thank you, you can do me an especial favor.”

“ Good ! What is it ? ”

“ Do not mention to Howard the disgraceful condition of babyhood in which you right now overtook me. It would make him unhappy; and if he gets out, somebody would have to answer for it. Then more trouble would follow.”

“ Is that all ? ”

“ Yes, thank you.”

“ When you and Colonel Grayson return, I will have an order for you to see Captain Grayson and Lieutenant Lewis, or there will be trouble among my friends with carpet-bags,” he said, ironically, to forestall her raillery.

“ I should not have mentioned your associates; you do me an injustice. Do not make any trouble for yourself on our account.” Then raising her finger threateningly, she continued: “ As a last word, I command that during my absence, you keep the peace.”

Mary Lou returned to Elmington with all the speed the old horse could muster. She told only a part of her experiences to Colonel Grayson, but that sufficed to arouse fears and suspicions that foul play had been practiced on the young men. They feared that either Howard and Manning had been subjected to a star-chamber trial, had

received summary sentence and had been secretly conveyed to prison at Nashville; or that they had been murdered by hired assassins. Nothing was impossible if the officers despaired of collecting a bribe, for they feared a trial.

Colonel Grayson mounted the work mule, and with Mary Lou rode toward Kosciusko. As they neared the village, they met Felix driving like mad, evidently going in search of them. His appearance did not allay the anxiety of Mary Lou, who was already wrought to a high nervous tension by the events of the morning. But as Felix drew near, his beaming countenance reassured her.

"Ah, Brother Rodeny, I have it at last; here is the order for Howard's release. Read it, Mary Lou," he cried, handing her a folded paper.

"To the jailer:" it read. "Release Howard Grayson from custody. By order of Attorney-General. Joshua Streeter,
Sheriff."

"But, Felix, that does not mention Manning Lewis," said Colonel Grayson, quickly, when Mary Lou had read the order. "Have you seen Howard? I do not think he will accept liberty, leaving his friend in jail."

"Brother Streeter is now out to see Major Lewis, and may arrange for his son. I could do nothing for young Lewis."

"He will do nothing with Walker Lewis on the plan he suggested to me, you know that," answered Colonel Grayson. "You paid no money for this paper, did you, Felix?"

"Not a cent. Influence, alone."

"I will see Howard, but I am certain he will remain with his friend. Both are equally innocent, and Howard will not accept freedom and cast an imputation on Manning. But we surely are grateful for all your efforts in our behalf, Felix. Shall I keep this paper?" he asked, handing out the order.

"Certainly, it is for you, and Mary Lou."

Felix drove on down the pike that led to Fairfax, evidently to meet the sheriff. Near the jail Colonel Grayson and Mary Lou met Avery.

"Ah, I have succeeded in part; here is an order for you to visit Captain Grayson and Lieutenant Lewis at pleasure. I wish it were an order for their release; but that will come later. It's bound to come! The County Guards are afraid of them, or they would have been out months ago. The young gentlemen know too much, or the Guards think they do. You know how that is; it's infamous, but true—imprisoned, not for crime, but to conceal the crime of others! But matters are badly stirred up; a crisis is near; everybody is trying to cover tracks, and it may result in the release of the martyrs. I hope so! Miss Grayson, it affords me great pleasure to deliver this writing to you." And the Captain raised his hat as he handed the order to her.

"Thank you, heartily, Captain Avery. We feel that you are doing your best for us; but again let me ask, do not embarrass yourself on our account."

Mary Lou handed the order to Colonel Grayson and he folded it in with the one he had received a few moments before from Felix.

The excitement of the day, the tension caused by officers scurrying about with mysterious and ominous countenances, by watchers posted in several parts of the town to spy on the movements of certain citizens, was not all outside the jail. The clamor raised when Mary Lou was boisterously stopped on her way to visit her brother had penetrated the corridors and was known to every unfortunate within. Streeter made an early visit to Howard and Manning, and after expatiating on the glories of liberty and the responsibilities of a sheriff, sought to get a letter from the latter to Major Lewis asking him to pay a bribe, in the name of costs, that they might be set at liberty. Failing of this, the sheriff had issued the order forbidding anyone to see them.

Later on, Felix, to whom all schemes were known, all doors open, went there and tried to get signed a written statement—in effect a piece of perjury—exonerating the County Guards from participation in the death of Jonas Smith. Zack Brassley was back of this plan, and the success of it was the same as the earlier undertaking of the sheriff.

Naturally enough, after the stir and strain of the forenoon, the visit of Mary Lou and Colonel Grayson to cell Number 6 took on some of the features of a reunion. All the fears, anxieties and tribulations of the morning were discussed, except the insults to Mary Lou by the negro loafers. Of this she made no mention. The heaviest burden she bore alone, and in silence.

When this reunion was over and Colonel Grayson and his daughter had started for home,

they met Felix, his horse covered with foam from furious driving, going toward the jail. Sheriff Streeter rode with him.

"What did Howard say," Brother Rodeny? cried Felix, without stopping.

"That he and Manning would go out, or stay together," Colonel Grayson called after him.

"All right," said Felix, pulling up. "Come back a minute; we have another proposition."

Howard and Manning, pale and thin, were brought into the jailer's office and all were seated for a general consultation. Avery, who had watched the working of events and thought a culmination near, walked in and joined the crowd. Zack Brassley edged through the door and took a chair near Felix, to the evident discomfort of the young parson.

"We ought to send for Colonel Hughley," said Howard.

"He's out of town," answered Felix, prompted by Brassley.

Streeter was very nervous; he shuffled about the room, tried to appear busy and preoccupied, and twitched the wrinkles of his face into countless grotesque forms. Felix was spokesman, and he launched, without apology or preliminary, into the business of the occasion.

"We are all friends and can get to a settlement in a few moments, I am sure. Howard and Manning Lewis can walk out of here free men, on one condition." But nobody present seemed to have any curiosity. No one spoke.

"On one condition, I said," he continued, somewhat disappointed with the small show of

interest his first statement had created. "That condition is the surrender of the negro Pleas, and the return of Lieutenant Brassley's musket."

"Two conditions to that deal," said Manning Lewis, quickly.

"Very well, on two conditions, then," said Felix, a little annoyed by the coolness of Manning.

"Well, Manning, we'll go back to Number 6. Have a pitcher of ice-water sent up to the rear parlor, over the kitchen, second floor, known to history as Number 6, please, Mr. Sheriff," said Howard, without looking up. He seemed to have little confidence in the proceedings.

"Why not surrender the nigger?" asked Brassley.

Howard turned his gaze from the floor and fixed it on Brassley, as he said: "Because, in the first place, Pleas is not a nigger; in the second place, I don't know where he is; in the third place, if I did know I would rot in jail before I would give him up to you. Do you know where Pleas is, Father?"

"I do not. I have not seen Pleas nor heard from him, directly nor indirectly, these last nine months."

"Give up my musket, then," persisted Brassley.

"We have n't it," said Colonel Grayson.

"Who has?"

"It is in the safe keeping of a good and trusty man; one who is exempt from barbarous search," said Colonel Grayson. Avery winced. "That was not intended for a personal remark, Captain Avery; I only wanted to let Mr. Brassley understand that his musket was beyond his power to re-

claim, for the present,"' Colonel Grayson continued, when he noticed that his first statement had made the wrong effect on Avery.

"Hit's my gun, my property, an' I want hit," persisted Brassley.

"It now is evidence, and the demands of justice rise above property rights. You will get it, safe and sound, after it has served the needs of justice," answered Colonel Grayson, calmly.

"I don't know about that, Colonel Grayson," said Manning. "He abandoned the gun — threw it away — and Howard found it. Seems to me it is our property. We want it as a souvenir, if we ever get out."

"You ought to pay a reasonable price for it, then," said Colonel Grayson.

"Can't we arrive at some arrangement by which these boys may go home? What would you suggest, Captain Avery?" asked Felix.

"Nothing, I believe," answered Avery, who had a scheme of his own.

"What will you suggest, Brother Rodeny?"

"A fair trial."

"And you, Brother Streeter?" asked Felix, quickly, to cover his brother's answer.

"The costs ought to be paid, and these prisoners released."

"What say you, Howard?"

"Number 6, and ice-water," answered Howard.

"And you, Lieutenant Lewis?"

"This talk makes me sick," said Manning.

"Lieutenant Brassley?" called Felix.

"They oughter give me my gun, or be hanged; them is my opinions."

Howard and Manning laughed heartily at the savage sentence of the late negro-beater.

"You are pretty severe, Lieutenant. Can nothing else be done?" asked Felix, looking from one to another, until he saw Mary Lou, who sat erect and defiant between her father and brother, holding an arm of each. "Can't we make this young lady happy by the release of her brother and friend, Brother Streeter?"

The face of the sheriff twitched and wrinkled a minute, and then he said: "The costs will have to be paid."

"This is a great disappointment to me," said Felix, in affected despair. "I honestly hoped that they would walk out before this, free men. The State officers, from the Governor down, have refused to interfere. The local officers can not see their way clear to dismiss. Well, well, we shall have to invent new expedients."

"Take the prisoners to their cell," commanded Streeter.

"Good-bye, Little Sister. Come to see me every day at Number 6. Don't forget the number," said Howard, cheerfully, and he kissed her again and again. Poor Mary Lou! The tears that had started in the morning had not all flowed out; with this new disappointment, the worst of all, she broke down and wept pitifully.

"Don't weep, Little Sister, or I shall make a show of myself. You shall see me every day; and sometime, some day, I shall be free—free without conditions. Then we shall be happy again. Give my regards to enquiring friends."

The jailer was drumming impatiently with his

great iron key on the door that he held open, and Howard and Manning started to go. As they were leaving the room both turned to say a final farewell, when they saw the outside door open and Anton Nelson enter. Both stopped to say "howdy."

"This is a pleasant party, only for Miss Mary Lou's tears. Mr. Sheriff, Felix Grayson, Brassley, whoever is responsible for the suffering of this sweet girl can not be adequately punished. These young men are soldiers, they complain at nothing; but the man who causes one tear to stain these beautiful cheeks, is a fiend. I am not an office-holder nor an office-seeker, and can speak my sentiments, so long as I have the personal courage. Here, Mr. Sheriff, are papers that will break up this little party."

Sheriff Streeter wiped his spectacles with the lining of his coat-tails, and then read:—

"To the Captain of the County Guards,

Kosciusko.

I 'm tired of being cat-hauled about that Smith case. Twice I have asked to have it set for trial, but Federals interfered. Have Attorney-General set it for trial immediately—the very next case—or dismiss on receipt of this.

Simon,

Governor."

"Decide right now, no more deviltry, or I will take the evening train to Nashville," said Mr. Nelson, fiercely.

"I can't dismiss; that's the Attorney-General's business," said Streeter.

"But you know whether he intends to try it or not," interposed Mr. Nelson.

"He'll dismiss, I guess."

"Just what we have been working for all the time," put in Felix.

"One word!" said Mr. Nelson, angrily. "But for the infamous opposition of three men in Kosciusko, two of whom are here present, and the third is yet unknown to me, this order would have come months ago. I never asked for more than a trial or a dismissal; the other three demanded delay. Their motives were probably known to themselves; the work they did was damnable. Colonel Grayson, you may be able to put two and two together and the result will be the schemes that prompted these three persons. In one case, it was money; in the other, I don't know what, because I don't know who did the underhanded work. How long shall our party be disgraced by such sneaking business!"

"I can not thank you, Anton," said Colonel Grayson, taking Mr. Nelson's hand. Again the sun shone through the clouds, for Mary Lou was laughing through her tears as she showered blessings on the head of the honest Radical.

"You don't accuse me, do you, Brother Nelson?" asked Felix, patronizingly.

"I have called no names," was the reply.

"Wall, I arrest that nigger on sight," roared Zack Brassley, as the only outlet for his rage.

"Not until you get your musket, if you know what's good for yourself," said Howard.

Brassley had forgotten that feature of the case, but on being reminded of it, suddenly remembered a business appointment and bolted the party without another word.

XXVII

THE FREEDMAN BECOMES A STRIKER

IN no other part of this continent are the four seasons so definitely marked as in the Middle Southern States. Here spring is the delightful season of bud and bloom: three months of new life and fresh growth. The migratory birds come with chirp and song to await the tardy break from winter to summer, in the North. This splendor of nature was at its full; the buds were open; corn and cotton showed bright green rows that fluttered and rustled in the breeze.

Colonel Grayson, like other planters, had hired such hands as he could get from the Freedmen's Bureau. Two were by the month, at fixed wages for the crop season; three were at work on the shares system. Contracts, with a great display of pen-flourish and sealing wax, were executed and deposited with the guardian Bureau. With these laborers, a portion of the wide, rich bottom adjoining the Opal was in corn and cotton that showed a promising growth; it seemed as if the soil were making an intelligent effort to reclaim its character from the disgrace of four years of weeds and foul stuffs.

Howard Grayson went straight home after his liberation. That same night Pleas came and knocked at the back door. When the door was opened, he grinned, said "Good-evenin'," and started for his room, as if he had been away

only for a day. He had not been seen there since he went with Mary Lou to meet the young gentlemen, nine months before, although the horse he rode away had been found in Mr. Dodge's pasture three days after the ambuscade.

The next morning Howard took the field to superintend the work and help the day hands. His presence and enthusiasm gave new zest, and everything moved merrily. He did not say, "Go;" he said, "Come on, boys." The pace he set proved too hot for the negroes, after their idleness of a year about the Bureau; in less than a week's time the two day hands took sick. Doctor Anderson was called in, and after an examination pronounced both to be afflicted with "spring fever." The sun had warmed their blood, and had developed in each a chronic laziness of malignant type. The doctor prescribed steady, moderate work; but the men refused the remedy.

The infection spread; the share hands quickly followed the example of their brethren, and together they spent half of their time lounging about Kosciusko. The cotton was at that period of growth that required constant attention; weeds covered the ground between the rows; a few more days of neglect and the crop would be ruined.

Colonel Grayson took Doctor Anderson and went to the Freedmen's Bureau to make complaint. The doctor made a statement regarding the physical condition of the negroes. The agent listened patiently, looked wise, and invited Colonel Grayson into his private office.

"This is a hurrying time of the year, Mr. Grayson?" asked the agent, with a knowing look.

"Yes, sir, very."

"I'm told that unless cotton has good care now, it will be a failure."

"Weeds have so thoroughly taken our soil during the past four years that they grow quickly. The ground must be tilled constantly for a month, or we shall get no crop," answered Colonel Grayson.

"Cotton is ticklish stuff to raise, anyway, is n't it?" asked the agent.

"With us it requires more tending than in the sections farther south."

"Your name is Grayson? Yes, Colonel Grayson," said the agent, in a very friendly manner. "I will look over your contracts." And he sent for the documents. After reading the five carefully, although they were exactly alike, except for name, he said: "I can arrange this for you without further trouble. I'll ask you to send the niggers to see me," he continued, writing down the name of each on a tablet.

"I surely am obliged to you, sir," said Colonel Grayson, rising to go.

"That's very good, Colonel, but not quite enough," answered the agent, without looking up from his writing. "Here's a little bill that you will please pay." And he handed out the paper on which he had written:—

Col. Grayson

To James Bragg, Dr.
Consultation and work on 5 labor contracts —————
\$25.00.

Colonel Grayson dropped into his chair.

"You look surprised. Well, my friend, that

is a just and honest bill. My duties are clearly defined by law. I have to make contracts and keep them on file for reference; but keeping niggers at work is another thing."

"I have no means of enforcing these contracts. You are the guardian of these colored people and ought, in fairness, to see that they live up to their agreements. Besides, I have taken little of your time," protested Colonel Grayson.

"Oh I can't work for nothing; my time is valuable. I'm busy from morning to night on just such cases as yours."

"Can not I get other hands to take the place of these?" asked Colonel Grayson.

"If you did you'd have to pay these niggers for the full season; that would be my ruling," said Bragg, with all the assurance of a man of unlimited power. "It's cheaper to keep these at work; don't you see?"

"I have not so much money with me; and what little I have, was to be used in buying food for my family. I shall have to raise the money, sir."

"Never mind the money to-day, then; but it's no pay, no work, Colonel. How much have you in your pocket?" asked Bragg, coldly.

Colonel Grayson counted out six dollars; he thought, from former experience, that the officer would be content with what he could get.

"Well, I'll give you credit for six dollars on account," said Bragg, taking the money and making the entry.

"May I trouble you for a receipt?"

"When the bill is paid, I'll receipt it. I don't

do an installment business; cash, strictly cash. When the bill is paid, the niggers will go to work."

Colonel Grayson went home, called on his banker, Uncle Phil, who raised the necessary amount from the bed of Opal Creek, and the bill was paid.

The next morning all the negroes were at work, but with a sulkiness of temper that promised no permanent good. Howard affected not to see this, and led off with all the force he could command. After the day in the field, all the negroes trudged to Kosciusko to attend a meeting of the League, or to join in noisy frolics in the streets. These nightly brawls had come to alarm even the Federal officers, and for some time had been the terror of the citizens; for the black men had not contented themselves with story and song and laughter, their usual entertainment, but had come to make night hideous with cursing, shouting, and firing of pistols and muskets.

That night the house of Mr. Sutton, a neighbor of the Graysons, was burned, and the family escaped with their lives, only. It had been fired from the outside, in four different places. The whole community was aroused and assembled about the conflagration.

When all was done, and the fire had reduced the comfortable home to a mass of red cinders, a knot of neighbors collected in a corner of the yard and fell to discussing the event. It was a chance meeting; the same over-ruling Chance decreed that there should be only five persons present, and that these five should be young men.

From the misfortune of Mr. Sutton, and the probable perpetrators, it was but a step to the daily chapter of outrages. Then and there a committee of two was appointed to wait on the Federal and local authorities to ask that the nocturnal orgies of the negroes be stopped. Each of the five engaged as a committee of one to ascertain if possible what truth was in the rumor then current, that speeches had been made in the Union League tending to incite the colored men to crime. The following night was the regular weekly meeting of the League, and in order to give all an opportunity to report fully, it was agreed that these five persons should meet on the second evening on the Bluff.

All this was the work of a few minutes; for while there had been no previous consultations, the subject had been forced upon the people so often and so fearfully, that all had given it mature deliberation and were ready to act.

XXVIII

AN EXPLANATION

THE day following that on which Howard and Manning were discharged, Captain Avery rode out to Elmington. Colonel Grayson and Mary Lou were just back from the field where they had gone to see how the work progressed, and had taken chairs in the veranda.

"‘Light and tie,’ as they say at the country store,” said Colonel Grayson. “Pleas will come directly and give your horse better attention.”

“Thank you; I can stay only a few minutes, and Pomp will do nicely tied to this limb.”

“Can not you stay and have supper with us, Captain Avery?” asked Colonel Grayson. “Our family circle is complete again, and we are in an unusually hospitable mood. You see, Captain, we do not know how long we shall be undisturbed. Howard, or I, or both, for that matter, may be in jail before another sun; hence we must enjoy the moments of freedom while we have them.”

“Thank you, again, but I can’t stay this evening,” said Avery. “Is Captain Grayson about?”

“In the field, showing the negroes how to do a day’s work.”

“I rather expected to see him, and hoped he would be present to hear the statement I want to make to you and Miss Grayson regarding the remarks of Mr. Nelson yesterday. Did you think he referred to me in any way?”

"For myself, Captain Avery, I could not understand what Anton meant. It did not seem possible that you could have been alluded to, so I just gave the whole matter up. As for the other persons referred to — well, that is nothing."

"I was making every effort possible to secure the release of your son and Lieutenant Lewis; but I wanted the discharge to come from those who had started the disgrace; they ought to have been forced to let the young men go. I thought it could be done, and was working to get the local officers into such a corner that they would have to lie down. They were working to checkmate me; and by superior cheek, beat me; although I had them pretty well tied up when Mr. Nelson came in with the much-sought document."

"We are grateful for every honest effort made in our behalf. The effort, not the result, ought to measure our gratitude," said Colonel Grayson.

"I did not know that Mr. Nelson was doing anything in the case," said Avery.

"Nor did we, until he burst into our presence with the papers in his hand. But that is Anton's way; he never advertises his benefactions, although his life has been full of them."

"But I am disappointed at not having whipped those Kosciusko officers. I didn't want them to give up voluntarily; I wanted to drive them to do it. Had I known that Mr. Nelson was at work on the case, I might have joined forces with him to good results. As it was, I fear we were working at cross-purposes, without either of us knowing it."

"We appreciate your efforts, Captain Avery,

and believe them sincere," said Mary Lou. "And I appreciate your desire to annihilate your political associates. They seemed to think yesterday, after all was over, that you were somewhat under a cloud, and manifested much satisfaction. They are strange persons."

"I know they did; and I feared that you would misunderstand my position. But the same splendid generosity that has excused every act of my official and personal stupidity is still extended. Is there no limit to it, Colonel Grayson?" Avery had prepared this speech with great care, and felt easier after he had delivered himself of it.

"You flatter us, Captain Avery," Colonel Grayson answered, quickly. "It is the time-honored custom of the Southern people both to make and to break friendships slowly. You are simply the creature of our custom. That you like it, is another evidence of your good taste, and of our discretion in taking you into our good graces. Daughter, can not you persuade Captain Avery to share our snack?"

"I shall be very happy to do so; and if he is in a hurry, I will go to the kitchen and help. Howard will be disappointed if he does not see you, Captain Avery."

"You are very kind; but I must return to town at once," said Avery, looking at his watch.

"Always in a hurry!" sighed Mary Lou, with mock gravity.

"Not to go from this house. How we are misunderstood! I have taken weeks from duty, to sit in the light of your smile."

"Have you all that time charged up against me?" asked Mary Lou.

"At regular wages — one dollar per day."

"Oh, Father, we are bankrupt! Did you ever see such greed? Oh, these Yankees, these Yankees! I reckon you will give the claim to your Brother Streeter for collection?"

"I would love to collect it myself."

"What shall I say, Father? I can't pay, I —"

"You had better repudiate," suggested Colonel Grayson.

"Oh, yes, that's the word. I repudiate, Captain Avery. Will you stay to supper, now?"

"Thank you, again, I must leave this minute. I hope to have the pleasure of pressing my claim at some later day."

"I repudiate, I warn you. I've learned a new word, and shall use it."

XXIX

WHICH SHOWS THAT ALTHOUGH THE ETHIOPIAN CAN NOT CHANGE HIS SKIN, THE CAUCASIAN MAY CHANGE HIS COLOR

ON their way home from the fire, Howard asked Pleas about the character of the speeches he was hearing at the League; the negro had resumed his membership with the organization and was a regular attendant on its meetings.

"I caint tell yo' nothin', Mars Howard; I is swore to keep secrets. But hit am my 'pinion mo' houses be bu'nt; dat am my 'pinion, suh."

"I don't ask you to break your oath of secrecy, Pleas, but we ought to know what is being plotted against us. Of course you are watching, but how can I find out, for sure?"

"Asy 'nough, if yo' was a nigger," answered Pleas, curiously.

"But I am mighty near white, especially since I was in jail."

"Caint yo' black up?" asked Pleas. "Yo' useter play de nigger."

"Can you pass me in, if I do?"

"Mebbe."

"How, boy?"

"I tole de outen guard I bring a frien' to-morrer evenin'," answered Pleas, easily.

"Will you give me the signs and pass-words?"

"Naw, suh, Mars Howard; I swore to keep secrets."

"How can I get in, then?"

Pleas was silent for a moment, and then he said: "Yo' gits Miss Mary Lou to paint yo'; paint yo' face, an' han's, an' arms, an' ears, an' naick, all brown—yo' be brown-skin nigger. Yas, suh, a brown-skin nigger. Den yo' gits de pass-wu'd, mebbe."

"When is all this to be done, Pleas?"

"To-morrer evenin', right soon arfter da'k. Yo' gits shet of Mars Rodeny; Miss Mary Lou paints yo'."

A negro man had arrived at Elmington the next morning after Pleas had made his reappearance. He was introduced by the latter as a friend from Arkansas, and was so received, although there were plenty of reasons to doubt that Pleas had crossed the Mississippi River during his absence. This stranger made himself at home; helped about the little jobs of rebuilding with which the old servant puttered; came and went as if he had been born and brought up on the plantation.

The next evening, Howard complained of being tired, and when supper was over, made an excuse that sent Colonel Grayson to Mr. Dodge's to borrow some trifling article for the work.

The blackening of Howard's face, hands, and arms was soon finished; and as it was now quite dark he made straight to Pleas's cabin, for the negro had abandoned his room in the house, and had patched up a cabin in the quarters, on the advent of his friend. Howard gave five knocks on the door, as he had been instructed to do. A voice from within said: "Hark yo', Pleas; a brudder knock." Then it called out: "For'd, brudder,

an' give de pass-wu'd." But Pleas opened the door carelessly, and said: "Evenin', brudder Sam. How is yo' dis evenin'?"

"Tol'able, thank yo'," answered the blackened man from the shadow.

"Come in, brudder Sam. How is yo, folks; I heerd dey was ailin'?"

"Mis'able, br'er Pleas, jes' mis'able," answered Howard, stepping inside. "My ole woman am jes' seek; not zactly bed-seek, but ailin' an' mis'able. Caint eat nothin' but spoon-victuals."

"Mighty bad," said Pleas, sympathetically.

"Brudder Eli, from Arkansas," he continued by way of introduction. They bowed, said "evenin'," and shook hands. Howard noticed a peculiar pressure of the hand, and returned it. The stranger seemed not the least embarrassed, and began to talk volubly about the League.

"We tuck a drap, brudder Sam; hev one?" said Pleas, holding up a jug, at which Howard understood the free and easy behavior of the man from Arkansas.

"Thank yo', br'er Pleas, doan min'. Mighty proud if my ole woman hed dis liquor. Do her a power o' good. I is mightily fear'd she die out."

Pleas gave his friend from Arkansas a big drink, and sat the jug by his side. The room was almost dark; a few coals smouldering in the chimney, where the negroes had cooked their supper, gave just light enough so that Eli could see the jug. Little was said for some minutes, but the member from Arkansas took several drinks.

"I mus' go to de stable, gen'lemen," said Pleas, when his friend had reached a condition suitable to his plan. "Brudder Eli, 'struct brudder Sam in de pass-wu'd, 'ginst I come back. He go 'long dis evenin'."

Eli was mellow and confidential, and was fast approaching a maudlin state. Not content with repeating the pass-word a score of times, he held Howard's hand with the grip of the order, until the effect of the liquor caused his muscles to relax. He worked heroically, went through the ceremony of initiation, opening, closing, and installation. By the time Pleas returned, the member from Arkansas was mumbling the pass-word, but could not raise the jug to his mouth.

"Come, brudder Eli," cried Pleas, "we mus' be goan." But Eli only struggled to give the pass-word again; he could not move.

"We puts him to baid," said Pleas, beginning to undress the drunken negro.

"This is not right, Pleas," said Howard, forgetting his disguise, and thinking only of the trick.

"Dat's what I tells 'im. De fool nigger git drunk err time liquor am 'roun'. Looks like he caint leave hit be." And Pleas rolled the insensible negro into the bed.

"Git into dese pants an' overcoat, right quick." Howard responded with great energy.

"Won't he come to, Pleas?" asked Howard, anxiously.

"Not fo' a week; dat am sutler's whisky, brudder Sam. One dram dat liquor good fo' fo' drunks. Now we go." Pleas stopped suddenly. "Yo' knows de pass-wu'd?" he asked.

"Yes, Pleas."

"I nerr tole yo'?"

"No."

Howard put his hand into a pocket of the trousers and pulled out something. He held it before the dying embers.

"Fo' de Lawd!" cried Pleas, "a rabbit's foot! Jaub hit back in yo' pocket, brudder Sam; we go clean through dis evenin', an' no mistake. Yo' am brudder Eli, now; not brudder Sam. Nerr was Sam; always Eli. Eli, from Arkansas. Wasn't yo', Eli?" said Pleas.

"I reckons I was, br'er Pleas," Howard answered.

XXX

WHAT ELI SAW AND HEARD

WHEN they reached the place where the regular weekly meetings of the League were held, a large schoolhouse on the outskirts of Kosciusko, they were met several yards from the entrance by pickets who demanded the pass-word. Howard whispered it in the ear of the negro outpost, gave him the grip, and passed on with Pleas. At the door they were challenged again, and the performance was repeated.

Inside the room was a large crowd, although the hour was rather early. Nearly all were negroes. A few white men jostled about in the gathering, talking, shaking hands, and playing the agreeable with their colored brethren. Prominent among these was Felix Grayson. But the parson never would have recognized the round-shouldered, shy, black man, dressed in an old Federal uniform, and wearing a bandage over his left eye, as his nephew.

Pleas led the way into a far corner and gave Howard the advantage of the darkest place. This precaution was hardly necessary, for the room was lighted by a tallow candle on the speaker's table, at the front end, near the door; its faint rays scarcely penetrated to where they sat. There was a great hubbub; negroes were pushing and hauling each other, talking loudly and laughing boisterously.

Presently, a big black man rapped for order, and reasonable quiet prevailed. All that could be accommodated on the benches and chairs, sat; others stood up around the wall. This was a further advantage to Howard, for a negro stood between him and the flaring candle, rendering his position quite dark.

Felix Grayson was asked to open the meeting with prayer. He responded in a wordy appeal to Divine autocracy for assistance in scourging the native white man from the South, that the black brother might occupy it in peace. In conclusion he said: "Even as Thou didst sustain the Children of Israel, after Thou hadst delivered them from bondage in Egypt, to make war on and drive out the Canaanites from the Promised Land." The "Amens" and other evidences of approval that followed this invocation were deafening; they showed to the one interested spectator that his uncle had made a strong impression on the audience. Pleas evidently took to another opinion, for he whispered: "Pa'son pray dat same way err evenin'; but I doan see de Lawd a-comin'."

The routine work of the society was then performed with fair precision; this was followed by an open order in which speeches were made. It looked as if one-half of the negroes present were determined to be heard, and all at once. They stood on benches, shouting and gesticulating. They cursed the chairman, cursed each other, and seemed on the verge of a general knock-down. This performance lasted for half an hour, and when the froth had escaped, some of the more

sober heads gained the attention of the presiding officer and spoke. Several of them referred to the burning of Mr. Sutton's house as a warning to the white folks. One quoted from a speech that had been made at a previous meeting by a white man, who, Pleas said, was a travelling peddler. This man imparted the information that "matches were only five cents a box." The repetition of this menace called forth cheers and hisses — the house was divided — for the more rational negroes had seen the effect of the threat and plainly deprecated it.

As the session drew to a close, Felix arose and announced an important meeting of the "Inner Circle," urging those present who belonged to it to remain. Howard gave to Pleas an enquiring look; the latter turned his face to the ceiling and then nodded his head. Howard looked upward; directly above where they were sitting was a square opening in the attic, not more than eight feet from the floor. "Asy 'nough, brudder Eli; yas, suh," Pleas said, aloud.

The negroes were now moving toward the door, in anticipation of the closing of the meeting, but Howard and Pleas sat quietly. When the chairman announced the adjournment, Pleas stepped quickly to a little yellow negro, whom Howard recognized as the mischievous son of Aunt Harriet, whispered in his ear, nudged him in the side, and laughed. The boy shot through the crowd toward the table; in an instant the candle was out, and the surging mass was shouting, laughing and cursing.

After inciting this mischief, Pleas was back in a

flash, and whispered: "Come, quick, brudder Eli!" And grasping Howard in his arms as if he were yet a child, the burly negro lifted him from the floor and held him aloft. Although astonished by the wonderful sagacity of his servant, the young man did not neglect to find the scuttle hole, quickly draw himself through and lie down on the loose planks that formed the floor of the attic. Before the light was made, Pleas had elbowed his way toward the door and was lost in the crowd. Outside there was a great disturbance: singing, shouting, cursing, and firing of pistols. Before the noise subsided, Howard adjusted himself to the rough floor, and as soon as there was a light, moved so that he could watch the proceedings through a huge crack.

All left the house but Felix and two negroes. Presently, Sheriff Streeter appeared; he was soon followed by the agent for the Freedmen's Bureau, Bragg; Provost-Marshal Samson, Squire Witan, and the Clerk of the County. "To your stations, guards," commanded Mr. Bragg; the two negroes went outside. Another candle was produced and lighted; Mr. Bragg took the chair and called for order.

"Mr. Clerk, please read your report," said the chairman.

The clerk read from a pass-book that he took from his pocket: "Collected from marriage licenses, one hundred and twenty dollars; thirty dollars from new, ninety dollars from re-marriages — all niggers. Ninety dollars to divide." And he read off the names of about fifty couples, who, like Uncle Phil and Aunt Manda, had been

adjudged by the Business Administration to be illegally wedded. The fees collected in these cases ranged from twenty-five cents to four dollars, each. Anything and all they could get.

"Anything else?" asked the chairman.

"Peddler's licenses, two hundred dollars. The law calls for ten dollars in each instance; eight licenses at ten dollars each, eighty dollars; but I got twenty-five dollars each, two hundred dollars — one hundred and twenty to divide. Cases dismissed by me, three; costs collected on them, two hundred and thirty-nine dollars — one hundred and fifteen, seventy-five, and forty-nine, just as I could catch 'em. That's all, Mr. Chairman. Ninety, one hundred and twenty, and two hundred and thirty-nine, makes four hundred and forty-nine; pretty good week." They all assented to the concluding statement of the clerk.

"Very good, but we must manage to sell more licenses. Lawyers, doctors, dentists, preachers, school-teachers, and a lot more ought to pay for their privileges," said the chairman.

"Have to get a new statute, I guess," put in the clerk.

"We will look out for that later. Sheriff Streeter, what have you to offer?"

"Settled twenty-three cases; got three hundred and ninety-six dollars and fifty-seven cents," answered the sheriff.

"Did any of those twenty-three fellows carry anything away?" asked the chairman.

"Not a cent, brethren," said the sheriff, making grim facial distortions. "That fifty-seven cents item," he continued, "was from a widow-

woman. She had living with her an old nigger wench about a hundred years old; I caught the old woman gathering firewood, and took them in. Well, the poor woman had only fifty-seven cents in money and a pailful of tears, so Judge Witan and I let her off with that." Howard looked at Felix's face during this recital; it showed full appreciation of the sheriff's humor.

"Squire Witan," called the chairman.

"I doan reckon I hev anything to say, please yore honor," answered the magistrate. "I an' Sheriff Streeter is podners — we wucks tergether, han' in han'. I taxes the cos', an' he gits the money; so, in reason, I am 'titled to half the credit on his report. Thet widder-woman felt powerfu' bad, an' I almos' got sorry fo' her; but we got the money jest the same." There was a general laugh at the squire's rehash of the sheriff's joke.

"Mr. Samson, what can you tell us about yourself?" asked the chairman.

"I have no money to divide, Mr. Chairman, but my work helps the good cause along. Every Rebel in this section of the country has taken the oath of allegiance, or I know the reason why. I keep after them in spite of Avery, and this nagging keeps them mellow. They are getting so that they don't want any truck with us, and pay assessments without asking questions. My department is keeping up its end." A smile of assent was visible on every countenance, and Howard, in the attic, made mental acknowledgment of the force of the Marshal's argument.

"We appreciate your services, Brother Sam-

son. United effort is what tells in politics," said the chairman. "Now for my department: I have revised one hundred and three labor contracts, for which I have received eight hundred and forty-three dollars." And the chairman straightened himself proudly, as he threw down the account book. "Here are the names. Our agents and spies have reported more than sixty plantations on which there has yet been no strike. Tell us what progress you are making, Brother Grayson, toward getting the niggers on these places sick?"

"There will be a strike on each of a dozen places to-morrow, and others will follow fast enough. I shall arrange for this later to-night; everything is going well," answered the parson, in the most matter-of-fact manner.

"Have all of you seen the Governor's new proclamation?" asked Streeter.

"What's it about?" enquired the chairman.

"In effect that troops, meaning County Guards and negro militia, will not be punished for anything they do to Rebels."

"Not bad for us," said Samson.

"Well, brethren, we will divide the receipts of the week," said Mr. Bragg. "Fourteen hundred eight-eight dollars and fifty-seven cents, is that right, Brother Grayson?"

"Check," answered Felix.

"Anybody in on this, except ourselves?" asked Mr. Bragg.

"Doan fo'git the Jedge of the Circuit Cote, Brother Bragg," put in Squire Witan.

"Nor the Attorney-General," admonished Streeter.

Each person received his share by a fixed scale; the Agent of the Freedmen's Bureau took for himself thirty per cent of the total.

"Now, brethren, we can talk better," said Mr. Bragg, "for each has good money in his pocket. There are several things that ought to be considered. We are doing pretty well; but we ought to be doing ten times better. Look at this rich county, and then think of our possibilities! Other offices must be made productive; more privileges must be paid for; contracts ought to be let. There is practically no limit to our opportunities. Beats preaching, don't it, Brothers Streeter and Grayson?"

"I like it better," answered the sheriff, his face going wrong in every feature.

"I feel that I am still doing God's service," said Felix, piously.

"'God helps him who helps himself,' is a safe and holy maxim, in my opinion," said the chairman. "So, if we want to get the full benefit of Divine assistance, we must help ourselves a little more. There are a thousand ways of turning money that we have not thought of yet. In the meantime, don't stop deviling the Rebels. As Brother Samson says, this pestering keeps them mellow. Another fire would n't hurt. Why, a committee of these Johnnies came to-day to see me about keeping the niggers in at night. They will pay us for that, yet. As soon as I have gone over the contracts, we will have another strike all around. Ought to have four or five before cotton is picked. I believe we can manage to keep these fellows shelling out money the balance of the year."

"But, Brother Bragg, don't you think this sort of thing will eventually make us enemies?" asked Streeter.

"What do we care for enemies?"

"I mean, in the North. Won't the North hear of this persecution and withdraw its support?"

"Not while we have the newspaper men on our side. The word has been passed up and down the line: 'Take care of the newspaper man.' Our correspondent is all right. He sent off to-day a fresh batch about southern outrages. We have nothing to fear from that quarter." And Mr. Bragg dismissed the matter with a wave of his hand.

"How about election, Mr. Chairman?" asked the sheriff, who liked his job well.

"We will discuss that at a later meeting. Election does not come until the middle of August, and we shall have lots of time. More money is the question now. Our officers are doing well; all we shall have to consider is the legislative ticket. We must send men to Nashville who will give us more privileges. We must levy more taxes, and sell more licenses. Then contracts! New bridges, new roads, perhaps railroads! There is no limit, gentlemen!" and the chairman became enthusiastic over the prospect. "Is there anything more, brethren?"

"I have a secret meeting to attend, as soon as this adjourns," said Felix.

"Then we stand adjourned for a week; and during that time let's keep things stirred up—make some things hot, Brother Grayson."

XXXI

THE SECRET CONCLAVE

THE lights were blown out; those who had participated in the profitable session of the "Inner Circle" left the room, one by one. Howard sat upright and stretched his arms and legs; the position and quiet in which he had been compelled to lie for an hour, had filled his muscles with aches and cramps. He waited, expecting to hear the four knocks, Pleas's signal for him to come down.

Instead of the knocks on the door, he heard it open with a creak and some person tiptoe into the room; presently another followed, closing the entrance. A whispered consultation, and one of the persons below went noiselessly to the door and opened it. A husky voice from the outside asked, "Who's here?"

"Come in, come in!" said a voice, which Howard recognized as his Uncle Felix's.

"Is Streeter here?"

"Yes, Brother Samson," answered the sheriff.

"Sha'n't we have a light?"

"Not yet," said Felix, beginning to sing, "Watchman, tell us of the Night," *sotto voce*. The other two discussed the burning of Mr. Sutton's house, even to the details of the kindling. This was soon interrupted, for the door opened.

"Who's there?" demanded Samson, gruffly.

"I is, Brudder Christopher," answered the unmistakable voice of a negro woman. "Come ahaid, Sister Edg'ton an' 'Liza," she called to the darkness. Three women stumbled into the room.

"Shall we have no light?" asked a woman.

"Certainly, if some one has a five-cents-a-box match," said Felix.

"Doan need no can'le to fin' me; I is n't no black warnut." This humorous sally was quickly followed by the scratching of a match, and one of the candles was lighted.

The light revealed Miss Edgerton, the teacher in the negro school, and two yellow negresses. The six persons were paired off like lovers on a picnic.

"Now to business," said Felix.

"I doan love dis can'le; puff hit out, Sister Edg'ton," cried the big wench that Sheriff Streeter had drawn in this strange lottery.

"Not now, Sister Maria; Mr. Grayson has some business to talk over," said Miss Edgerton, with the superior air of a school-ma'am.

"Go ahaid, Brudder Grayson; I is lis'nin'," and Maria snuggled close up to the sheriff, who was visibly embarrassed.

"What do you know about James, the colored man that used to belong to Mr. Saunders, Sister Maria?" asked Felix.

"Dat black nigger?"

"Yes, he's black enough."

"Lame in one laig?"

"Guess he is lame," answered Felix.

"Tol'able good."

"Will he go out nights, alone?"

"Naw, suh; he fear'd."

"What is he afraid of?"

"Ha'nts," answered Maria, seriously.

"Do you know of any colored brothers that will go alone?"

"In de dark?"

"Yes, in the dark and alone," persisted Felix.

"Naw, suh, 'cept Pleas, de Cunnel's man."

"Can we get him though?"

"If he say he go, he go," said Maria, quickly.

Howard smiled, and muttered to himself, "It's all in the promising, as you said, Maria."

"Can you get him to go, Sister Maria?" asked Felix.

"I doan know. Brudder Streeter won' lemme try; he jalous of Pleas, my ole sweetheart."

"Go on now, Sister Mariā, that's not so," answered Streeter, greatly embarrassed. The others laughed.

"Hit am so, an' yo' knows hit."

"Well, we better drop Pleas, right now. He is too cunning, and too loyal to Mr. Howard. Whom would you name, Sister 'Liza?"

"No pusson, Brudder Grayson," answered the rather good looking mulatto who sat close to Samson.

"Don't you know one?" asked Felix, in despair.

"Dat nigger narr was bo'n'd."

"We can not send two together any more; the experiment night before last was unsatisfactory. Two may get caught."

" You're not going to have any more fires, are you, my dear? " asked Miss Edgerton.

" We have no fires, my dear Minnie, " said Felix, quickly. " These arrogant Rebels deserve it; we must drive them out. This country is ours; our people have earned it. You admit that, yet you oppose the measures that will most easily and surely produce the end. If their houses burn they will clear out at once. But I don't want to burn any houses; I am opposed to that kind of policy. Now, Maria and 'Liza, get a good man or two for a night job. You can get them where I could n't, and when you have the men, let Brother Streeter know who they are. " One could scarcely tell from an argument with the young preacher, which side of the proposition he was on. After this harangue, Miss Edgerton seemed satisfied, although she had no idea whether or not Felix was then guilty of arson, and was planning another fire. Perhaps she did not care.

" Have you heard from those fellows who are out stirring up the negroes to strike? " asked Felix, looking at Maria.

" Dat man, Aleck, wus 'roun' las' evenin'. "

" Is he doing his duty? "

" I reckons he am, " answered Maria, knowingly.

" I wish he would come and see me sometimes. "

" I tells 'im. "

" Now there is just one thing more, " said Felix, after a few moments of silence, " we must bring down the false pride of these white people. The young ladies about here are carrying their heads too high; they are exalting themselves too much. What say you to that, my dear? " He

cared nothing for their pride, but this was the pet hobby of Miss Edgerton, and he was determined to use with her such arguments as would keep her in line.

"I know what the Good Book says about those that exalt themselves," answered Miss Edgerton, "and I am willing to be an instrument in the hand of God to help to abase them. Your niece is one of them. She don't carry so high a head, but she walks as if she were blind — pays no attention to anybody. I must admit, though, that in her own house she is as gracious as a queen. I can't understand her, and I don't like her."

"She say, 'howdy M'ria,' to me yistiddy," said Maria, proudly.

"Nothing will make the people of the South hate their country so quickly as an indignity to their ladies. I don't mean an indecent insult; just a little jar to their pride. For instance: Suppose one of these lordly dames was walking down the street to-morrow morning, sweeping the whole sidewalk with her hoop-skirts; two burly colored men meet her and refuse to give way. What would the lordly dame have to do?"

Miss Edgerton looked approvingly at her dress-reform habit, and answered: "Get down into the gutter."

"That would be rather humiliating, would n't it, Maria?" asked Felix.

"Good 'nough fo' her," said Maria, fiercely.

"We must either bring them to their senses or get them out of the country. Their pride is too deep-seated to be changed, so they will have to go. Well, it is rather late," continued Felix,

yawning, "and we had best adjourn this meeting." And Streeter, with Maria on his arm; Samson and 'Liza; Felix and Miss Edgerton, walked out into the darkness.

Howard stretched himself vigorously, for the cramps had taken possession of him again; these, with the self-repression he had been forced to exercise, had kept him miserable for another hour.

Foolish as these conversations sound to one not wholly familiar with the conditions then prevailing in the South, they were full of evil to Howard Grayson. He had thought there was plenty of plotting; but it never had occurred to him, nor to any one of his people, that there was such a system. Every sentence spoken by Felix Grayson had been carefully weighed, and the intent had not miscarried. Had he asked two negroes to run a white woman from the sidewalk, they would have refused; yes, and more, they would have told of his proposal, far and near. Had he approached a negro with a proposition to burn a house, he would have been scandalized within the hour; but an intimation to these yellow persons would produce the results, without the mention of his name.

And what purpose did Streeter and Samson serve? Merely as witnesses, so far as this meeting was concerned. Their relations with the two negresses were their own affairs, like thousands of other similar cases of the period. This authentic history is not concerned in such personal matters, except as they drop in incidentally.

Knowing all these conditions, realizing the

certainty of a terrific harvest from the seeds so insidiously planted, Howard had gone through all the stages from disgust to rage, and from rage down to fear, as his uncle proceeded to develop his plans. The silence that he was forced to preserve was not the least strain to his nerves.

He was so deeply entangled in the nefarious plots that he had heard laid for his people, that he did not hear the four knocks, and was awakened only when Pleas stuck his head inside the door and called, "Eli." Pleas struck a match, and Howard quickly let himself down to the full length of his arms and dropped, but the faithful servant caught and lowered him gently to the floor.

They hastened from the building and made off across fields for home, neither speaking a word. When they reached a lonely spot, Howard stopped and said: "I must tell you all, right now; I must have your advice before going another step. Oh, Pleas, it is more than hellish!"

They sat down on the ground and the young man related every word that he had heard. Pleas listened attentively, only interrupting with an occasional exclamation, like: "Dat's fine!" "Em-m," or "Gawd!"

"What can we do?" asked Howard, when he finished.

"M'ria tole yo'," answered Pleas.

"What was that?"

"Skeer 'em."

"Will that stop this deviltry?"

"Mos' of hit. Yo' cain skeer dese niggers plumb to death; yo' knows dat, Mars Howard,"

answered Pleas, with an air that expressed perfect satisfaction. It gave to Howard more than a degree of confidence.

"Let's go home, boy. Have a definite scheme for me to-morrow; tell me how to work out this 'skeering' business."

Howard took a good wash at the Opal, went home and to bed — but not to sleep that night. The infamy he had heard, haunted him. Pleas's project started a lively play of fancy that had not quieted when the rising sun lighted the east.

XXXII

A MIGHTY POWER COMES, BUT DOES NOT APPEAR

YOU came in tolerably late last night?" asked Colonel Grayson of Howard at breakfast the next morning.

"Tolerably early this morning, would be more like it, Father," answered Howard.

"These are bad times to be out of one's bed after night," said the Colonel.

"I was trying to find out something about these bad times, and the trail was a long one."

"You were not alone?"

"No, Father, I was in good, safe company."

"I do not question but you were in good company, my son; safe company would be hard to find."

"Pleas?"

"The very safest in the world. Did you discover anything worth the loss of sleep?" asked the father.

"I think so; can't tell for certain before midnight. I shall be out again to-night, but will carry Pleas along."

"Then you would best to take a little rest after dinner; I will go to the field and keep the men at work."

"Thank you, Father; I shall need to lie down a bit. I used to do without sleep, but since loafing in prison for nine months I find I have taken on a great habit for yawning," said Howard.

After dinner he sought out Pleas for a little conference. The negro was pretending to work in the garden.

"What did you mean last night, when you said we could scare the colored people to stay home?"

"Jes' what I said," answered Pleas, promptly.

"How shall we do it?"

"I doan know, suh; yo' knows bes'."

"What shall we frighten them about?"

"Nauow, Mars Howard, what a nigger mos' feard of?" asked Pleas, curiously.

"Ghosts?"

"Sperets," answered Pleas, triumphantly.

"Oh, I understand. I will talk with you about it to-night. You better get a nap and be ready to go out with me soon after dark."

"I is raidy; I doan wan' no sleep." And Pleas began hoeing vigorously to show that he was not sleepy.

When they arrived at the Bluff, Howard picketed Pleas at a good distance from the meeting place and went alone to the rendezvous. He was the last to arrive; the four were awaiting him. For a time they sat on the ground talking informally, first one and then another. To Howard, who realized more than any other person present, the gravity of the conditions confronting the people of the South, this idle talk became intolerable, and he spoke up: "Say, boys, we are making no headway; we never shall do any good this way. I move that Manning Lewis be chosen chairman, or moderator of this meeting, and that each of us report in regular order what he knows."

"I support that motion; only instead of calling him chairman or moderator, I move that he be the — the — well, Grand Cyclops," said Morton Seymour; he seldom took anything seriously.

The motion was put and carried.

"Now, brethren — "

"Hush!" They all cried together. "This is no branch of the Union League."

"That noise you-all made right now sounds like it, from all accounts," said Manning. "Well, the Cyclops can make no mistake; he was trying to see what kind of persons he was dealing with. What's the order of business?"

"I suggest that each of us make a report of what he has learned," said Howard.

"A tolerable suggestion, Mr. Grayson. Will the Khan of Watery Fork arise, salute, and reveal?"

Morton Seymour, whose paternal home was situated along the creek named, arose, made a profound salaam before the chairman, and reported as follows: "Most mighty Grand Cy.! Without further salutation permit your servant to report, that on yester morn he visited the office of the agent of the Freedmen's Bureau, near this sitting. He found the agent well and prosperous. He asked the well and prosperous agent if something could not be done to keep the negroes at home of nights. The agent thought the 'colored brethren,' as he called them, ought to be permitted to enjoy themselves; that this was now a free country. Your servant suggested that the negroes were creating disturbances, were firing

guns and pistols indiscriminately, to the danger of life and limb. The agent maintained that while the colored people were somewhat jubilant while under the influence of liquor, the officers proposed to remedy the evil by seeing that the colored brethren paid out their money for marriage licenses and other luxuries. Up to this point in our conversation the agent looked bored. Your servant thought he would stir up the mighty man, so he charged the negroes with having burned Mr. Sutton's house. Then was the great and prosperous agent wroth. He said that the house was fired by Rebels, or by accident; that the people of the South had to fear only late insurrectionists; that the colored brethren were all right and must be allowed to enjoy themselves after their own fashion. Your servant had the pleasure of bidding the great man a respectful and courteous good-morning, which the great man was too low-bred to appreciate. With the consent of the Grand Cy., your servant will 'set down,' in the language of the lamented Jonas Smith."

"What shall be done with the remarks of the Khan from Watery Fork?" asked Manning.

"File 'em down," cried Perry Houston.

"Keeper of the Great File, file 'em down!" said the Grand Cyclops.

"File 'em down," echoed the others in unison.

"Prepare to listen to the disclosure of the Rajah of the Third Civil District."

"Most puissant 'Clops,'" said Perry Houston, with mock obeisance, "may you never see your shadow on ground-hog day! I have nothing to

report, except to add to what my colleague has right now said; for in the language of Judge Witan, 'we is podners.' Together we made a decent and respectful appeal to the powers at Kosciusko for a safe and quiet community, and together we were turned down. There was something strange about the conduct of everyone of them, except Captain Avery; he was apparently candid and straightforward. But he could afford to be, for he said he could do nothing; that was very easily said. We met Felix Grayson after leaving the Bureau and he said the agent was a very greedy man, and he, Felix, thought a little money paid to this fellow, Bragg, would hush the negroes and quiet the disturbances. We told him that it took all our money to get the negroes brought back to work after the strike; Felix sighed, said it was too bad, and went on. The Provost-Marshal would not talk with us, and the sheriff had a contract to work on his face and could not spare time to listen to us. So there we are. All the planters in my neighborhood have paid the Bureau to get the blacks back to work under their contracts, and now they run about nights until they are utterly worthless by day. This night-hawking is the worst feature, Mr. Grand 'Clops, and there seems to be no cure, except to buy up the Freedmen's Bureau. Our people, especially our ladies, are in a state of terror, the like of which they never experienced when we were off to the war. I have nothing to recommend, Mr. 'Clops, and only ask that I may 'set down.' "

"What shall we do with the disclosure?"

"Too dod-gasted long; file it down," cried Morton Seymour.

"Keeper of the Great File, file it down!" said the Grand Cyclops.

"File it down," echoed the others.

Howard was chafing under all this nonsense. He alone knew the true state of affairs, and wanted serious talk; but as the meeting was proceeding on the lines he had suggested, he would not interrupt.

"The Mogul that reigns over the territory near the Union League, will now divulge," said Manning.

"Most mighty potentate, Cyclops de Grand, we are making light of a serious situation. Here we are threatened with anarchy; we are completely overrun by negroes in the hands of designing white men, and there seems to be no remedy," said Paul Willston. "You ought to live just one day near Kosciusko, and witness the performances. Last night, after the League adjourned, there was a regular fusillade in front of our house; two windows were broken, and a bullet lodged in the wall directly above father's bed. It is hell every time those fellows get together. Father went to see the Bureau officials, and got just no satisfaction. Every planter in my community has been bled; all the negroes who had the money to pay for licenses have been compelled to be married again; everything is growing worse. What shall we do, boys? I wish Colonel Grayson and Major Lewis were here to advise us. We must do something."

"What shall we do with the report?"

"It's short, let it not be filed," cried Morton Seymour.

"Let the Keeper of the Great File rest," said the Grand Cyclops.

"Rest; so says the Grand Cyclops, and he must be obeyed," the others repeated in unison.

"Listen while the Hydra from the shores of the blue Opal makes his exposure."

"Now, boys, as Paul has said, 'this is a serious business,'" said Howard, with great earnestness. "'I can not make nonsense of what I have to tell you; I believe it is a matter of life or death to the native whites of this Section. Yes, boys, it is more; the respect and honor of our ladies is this very hour at stake. So you will have to bear with me, and get down to hard, disagreeable facts for a time. What I will tell you, I know to be true, as much as if I had seen and heard them myself. No common rumor, no neighborhood gossip, no exaggeration.'" He went over the incidents of the night before, in narrative form, without disclosing his part in them. The knowledge that he had taken this adventure he kept for his sister, himself and Pleas. The only feature he eliminated from his recital was the mention of Felix Grayson's name. Family pride forbade this disclosure. Except for this, every word he had heard spoken was faithfully repeated.

This statement brought a moment's silence, which Morton Seymour found more oppressive than threatening disaster. He could keep still no longer; assuming an air of business abstraction he said: "I move you, Mr. Grand Cyclops, that this harrowing confession be rasped."

"Hush your nonsense," said Paul Willston. "This is serious enough; we must get shut of this

gadding about, or we shall have to quit our homes. What have you to suggest, Howard?"

"Pleas says we can scare the negroes until they will be afraid to stick their noses into the dark," answered Howard.

"How scare them?" asked Manning.

"Take advantage of their superstition; make up ghost stories, as we have done a hundred times."

"That's easy, but who will circulate your yarn? When the negroes were under our hands we could do that; but now they are in Bragg's bag — another proposition," said Seymour, who was skeptical, when not mischievous.

"Pleas will attend to my territory; each of you must have some negro to whom you can tell a good story in such a way that it will get into general circulation. Let's fix it up right now, and make a trial at once."

There was a brief silence; each was considering the proposition and calculating how it would affect his surroundings. Before any of them were ready to speak, Pleas called from the wood below: "Mars Howard! Mars Howard! See de fire." All turned to the direction from which the voice came, and saw the heavens illuminated with a red glow.

"Another house!" all exclaimed.

"Maria found her man for the night job," said Howard

"It's in my direction; it may be Graystone. Try the 'scare,' and let me know to-morrow. Good-night, boys." And Paul Willston was out of sight in an instant, making for home.

"We ought to have gone with him," said Manning, reproachfully. "But perhaps it is better to stay here and lay plans to stop this business altogether. Now for the story."

"Let's start a yarn about a monster that lives in the cave right under us. Something that parades at night, has big eyes, and eats negroes. How's that?" asked Howard, for a suggestion.

"Very good; but what is your 'sarpint' like?" Morton Seymour enquired.

"Oh, he has the head of a man, only it is four times as big, the body of a crocodile, and great scales as big as skillets, the legs of a—of—a turtle—twelve legs, six on each side, a tail that ends in a spear, like the satanic Cyclops. Is that too much?" asked Manning Lewis, straightening himself in pride before his off-hand creation.

"The cuss scares me already," cried Morton.

"I don't think there is any too much detail," said Howard. "If the story goes, the negroes will add plenty of particulars about his flaming eyes, frothy mouth and bloody teeth. What shall we call your child, Manning?"

"Now let some one else think of that; I've done my part," answered Manning.

"Something horrible," suggested Perry Houston, who had kept still since Howard had made his statement.

"Call it plain Man-Eater," said Howard. "The negroes will make a name quickly enough, if the story goes."

Pleas was then called in and the story was related to him. The alacrity with which he tacked on chapter after chapter of flesh-creeping

details was astonishing. Manning Lewis confessed the weakness of his own fancy.

"Naouw, gen'lemen, tell dat Eli, de nigger from Arkansas, was et up, body an' briches, by dat feesh. I wants to git shet dat drunk buzzard anyhow; he make me seek," said Pleas.

Agreeing to meet the third night following, to report on the effect of this venture, they parted.

Thus started, for Williams County, a mysterious power. The world gave it an organization, and many names; for itself, and among those who were connected with it, it was nameless. It hardly rose to the dignity of an organization; yet no organization ever wrought more systematically or effectively. It sprang from the direst necessity, yet those who started it never hoped that it would prove such a complete barrier for the protection of human life and personal rights.

It started by an accident; it worked as a joke.

XXXIII

IN WHICH ELI MYSTERIOUSLY DISAPPEARS

WHEN Pleas reached home he went straight to his cabin and shook out his friend, Eli. This worthy had not been out of doors since the night before, when he assailed, with natural vigor, the jug of sutler's whisky. But the liquor had now been gone some hours, and the negro began to recover his senses. Pleas made the fellow believe that he had committed a foul crime during his period of unconsciousness; and in a short time instilled into his clouded intellect a desire to get out of the country, and that quickly.

When Eli burst out with this proposition, Pleas made no argument; on the contrary, he drove the matter further and made the drunkard believe that he either must flee the State, or go to jail. In those days the negroes had much reverence for barred windows and iron doors; only since they have become educated and elevated have any considerable number of the colored people come to prefer a term in jail, with free board, to a job of work at good wages. So, when Eli, now thoroughly frightened and sobered, raised the question of car-fare, Pleas became alarmed, and asked quickly: "Ain yo' got no money? Thet am de beatenis' thing I err heerd tell of. Yo' caint walk; git caught, shu. Mought as well steal a hoss, as what yo' done a'ready. Feard to steal a hoss?"

"Yas, Brudder Pleas; I 'ud tumble offn de stole hoss," cried Eli.

"I gits de money from Mars Howard, mebbe. Yo' lef' yo' overcoat fo' s'cur'ty?"

"Yas, Brudder Pleas," cried Eli, with a sigh of relief.

During the months of his eclipse at Elmington, Pleas had been at work for wages on a little farm hidden away up a narrow valley in the hill-country. Here he was as safe as he would have been in Arkansas, and by many ingenious devices, he managed to keep himself reasonably informed of the trend of events in Kosciusko. And more, he earned quite a bit of money, every cent of which he kept religiously; and when he returned to his old home, he placed in Howard's hand the tobacco bag containing the whole sum. The young master refused the gift, but promised to keep the funds safely, subject to Pleas's call; he had only to ask for what he needed.

The money transaction being arranged, they put off, walking around Kosciusko for fear of the officers, whom Pleas declared might then have a warrant for the arrest of his friend, and made for the first station to the south of the county seat; and at an early hour, Eli took the train with a ticket for Decatur, Alabama. Pleas was back home before daybreak. When Howard came out the next morning he asked where Eli was.

"Doan know, Mars Howard. Reckons de ole man-eater got 'im. Hev n't saw Eli sence las' night. Hit sutnly am curus how a nigger gits et clean up, mighty curus."

"Where did he go, Pleas?" asked Howard.

"Dat ole man-eater wid twelve laigs, an' big eyes, an'a man's haid, an' a body like a allegator, an' scales as big as kittle kivers, an' claws like tater hooks, an' tail with a spear on de en', an' teeth like tombstones — dat critter sutnly mus' got 'im las' evenin'. Tell de niggers 'bout hit," said Pleas, with a peculiar twinkle of the eye.

"Where did you send him to ?" asked Howard, rather commandingly.

"Yo' tells de niggers, fust. I's sleepy, now," and Pleas yawned outrageously.

"Tell them yourself, you scoundrel," said Howard, disappointed with the effect that his show of authority had produced.

"Done tole 'em 'bout de man-eater, an' dat I caint fin' Eli nowheres."

During the forenoon, Pleas made it convenient to go to the field where the five negroes were hoeing cotton; and while they rested in the shade of a tree, he gave them more full and detailed particulars of the new monster. The effect that this foolish and impossible story had on these creatures can hardly be realized. They all believed it, and rivalled each other in creating fanciful and shocking details. Every man of them had a name for the beast; all had seen his tracks along the banks of the Opal.

When the sun marked the meridian, Pleas led the hands by a round-about course towards the house for dinner. At a point near the Opal, over a hill and out of view from the field where they had been at work, they came upon the torn and drabbled remnants of Eli's overcoat. For a space of several yards the cotton was torn from

the soil, the dirt was beaten, and there was every sign of a fierce struggle. Several imprints of great feet or paws were clearly seen, and the cruel claws of the satyr had dug deep holes in the soft earth.

"Doan I tol yo'?" asked Pleas, in triumph.
"Eli am et up, shu."

The statement was beyond question, and they went thoughtfully to dinner.

Each of the five young men who had participated in the secret meeting at the Bluff the night before, quietly set afloat in his immediate neighborhood the sfory agreed upon. Within twenty-four hours of its creation, it spread from the hills on the west to the ridges on the east. Nearly every negro knew it. Whence it came no one knew; it was there, and spread like fire through a pine forest. No white man was heard to repeat it; no white man seemed to know anything about it.

The officers and Carpet-Baggers heard the wild tale and thought it the fantastic creature of some idle negro's brain. That it was a blow struck out of the dark, either by design or accident, aimed at their abuses and usurpations, never once occurred to them. They thought themselves secure in all their assumptions; that the patient and courteous people whom they were daily outraging would neither defend nor retaliate.

It is not the province of this history to speculate on the relative qualities of Fate, or Accident, or Providence, in shaping the defenses of this long-suffering people. It is more in point to record that there was no incendiary fire in Williams

County that night, nor for many a day and night following. Maria's "man for a night job" had tucked himself carefully away in the corner of a cabin, behind a chimney's lug, there to listen to harrowing tales about a man-eater with twelve legs, the head of a man, the body of a crocodile, and other particulars; and about the disappearance of Eli, the colored gentleman from Arkansas, the relation of which kept him occupied until he had no taste for nocturnal adventures.

The next regular meeting of the League was the most shabbily attended of any since the order was started in Kosciusko. There were not a half dozen blacks in the room; the cordon of outposts was not on guard,—it was dark.

A week of comparative peace followed; only for the nagging of the officers, Middle Tennessee would have been again the earthly Paradise that God Almighty designed and created it in the beginning.

XXXIV

IN WHICH THE PURSUITS OF PEACE ARE EXEMPLIFIED

THE wholesome quiet produced by the first effort at regulating the lawless blacks, brought to the few who knew the simple origin of the movement a degree of security they had not felt for more than a year. They easily foresaw the completeness of their defense against negroes; they believed that a little ingenuity would supply means by which the infamous persecution by the officers could be checked, if, indeed, it could not be wholly circumvented. So, with true American enterprise, they began to plan for the morrow, before they had fully provided for the security thereof.

This weakness for discounting the future on the merest prospect of success (and “a fighting chance”) is an American disorder. It is very near of kin to the gambling instinct, although so thoroughly allied with all our institutions and methods, that it no longer bears the odium that still attaches to its discredited relation.

One of the first to begin to put his house in order was Howard Grayson. Margaret Dodge was now fully recovered from the illness brought on by overwork and insufficient food while a nurse in the Confederate hospitals. The misunderstanding between them had been brushed aside as soon as she was able to leave her sick-room and listen to Howard’s frank and manly apology. The scene

by which was enacted this reconciliation, was rather too sentimental for record in this most serious history; suffice to say, it was a full and complete restoration of confidence. And now that there was a fair promise of peace in the community, or, at least, a means for the procuring of peace, he asked her to name an early day for the celebration of their marriage.

With the love of being implored — even to the verge of being urged, on this and kindred subjects — so dear to the pride of the Southern girl — she put him off from day to day; but when she saw that he was really very anxious and took the matter seriously, she sent him to her father to make a formal request for his consent to an early wedding day.

John Dodge liked above all else to be consulted with. It made little odds what the subject was — that often did not interest him — it was the recognition of his opinion that fixed his attention. Howard knew his weakness and approached to this side of his nature.

“Well, well, my boy,” cried Dodge, rubbing his great hands together, “so you want to marry Margaret? Don’t blame you; she’s a fine girl; her father’s daughter, through and through. Well, you shall have her.”

“That’s tolerably well settled already; the time when, is the question now,” Howard interposed.

“That don’t make any difference; she’s yours; fix the time yourselves. Do you know I shall have to go back North on business pretty soon? May be gone several months; can’t tell. Lots of

business up North, Howard; oceans of it. I ought to be up there now and get my share; just wasting my time down here where everybody is broke, except those Federal officers. And then the climate — you just ought to see that climate! Never had a fainting spell there; too busy to drop down insensible in a fit, like I did on the Bluff at our celebrated duel. That was nothing in the world but biliousness; I was n't the least bit nervous or excited. Let 's see, what were we talking about? Oh, yes, that wedding! Go ahead, my boy; you and Margaret arrange it; only count me in; don't leave me out. Do you know, Howard, my boy, I have rather expected this ever since you and Margaret were children? It seems kind of natural that the daughter of John Dodge and the son of Colonel Rodeny Grayson should wed. My daughter and the son of the best and most influential man in Middle Tennessee ought to be joined in holy wedlock! Do you remember when you were children and went to the Old Field school, how you used to stop here every morning and get Margaret's books and dinner bucket? You were a fine boy then; yes, siree, a fine boy. The late Mrs. Dodge always loved you, Howard; she was a good woman, and a good judge of men — she showed that when she married me. Yes, yes; and you were a good soldier, too. Do you know I love a brave man? I hate a coward! Well, Margaret deserves a brave man; she 's a brave girl. Oh, she 's her father's daughter. Go and arrange the matter with her, and may God bless you, my boy. I 'd go along and talk it over with you, but I must write those business

letters. Business is business ! Have a church wedding, I want to invite those Northern fellows at Kosciusko, just to show them how we do business down here. ”

“ I think we shall have to leave the matter of church to Margaret. I more than half suspect she will object to any display,” said Howard, who spoke his own sentiments, hoping she would agree with him.

“ She ’s pretty headstrong, and I guess we ’ll have to let her boss this business,” answered Mr. Dodge. “ Do you remember about that deed ? Well, sir, she never has given it back to me; I can’t get it. If I go North to live, I shall sell the farm, and that one hundred acres takes the very heart out of the whole plantation.”

“ Perhaps it does n’t suit Margaret to think of the graveyard in which her mother and all the Saunders family are buried, as passing into the hands of strangers,” said Howard.

“ Oh, that ’s it, all right enough; but, my boy, business is business, and I ’m a business man. After all, she ’s right, and I am proud of her spunk. Natural, perfectly natural; she ’s her father’s daughter. Well, I ’ll just give that to her for a dowry; that ’s what I ’ll do. After I get settled down in business up North, and am making money hand over fist, may be you ’ll sell out here and join me; I ’ll make you a fortune, if you will.”

“ I don ’t reckon Elmington ever will belong to anybody but a Grayson, so long as there is a person in the world of that name,” answered Howard, quietly.

"That's right, too; stand by the old home-stead. Well, I must write these business letters. Go and arrange your wedding business, and God bless you both."

The marriage was arranged for, the day and hour set; but the church and the invitations for the Federal officers, except Captain Avery, were entirely overlooked by mutual consent.

XXXV

THE SECRET ORDER TAKES FORM, BUT NOT A NAME

AT the second meeting of the five, when they came together to compare notes on the effect of the wild tale about the man-eater, it was agreed all around that the society should enlarge its membership. Accordingly, when they met for the third time, each brought a friend, the ten making quite a formidable company.

By strange prescience, for there had been no agreement between the five, none had mentioned that he had attended a secret meeting. Only the five knew of it. The little world about Kosciusko did not know that the foolish story that had frightened the negroes into a state of reasonable docility, was a composite—the combined effort of five of their best known young gentlemen. The Southern folk, discouraged and hopeful in turn, but always patient, did not know that their defender—their avenger—was already in their midst; that although it was nameless and unorganized, they had seen its power and experienced its benefits.

Gatherings of late Confederates at night, either secret or open, were prohibited by the powers at Kosciusko. So, for fear of interruption, or discovery, the ten adjourned from the open on the Bluff, to the cave under it. The first business was an explanation to the new members of the

work already done. This finished, all took seriously to the matter of forming the accidental association into a permanent organization.

A committee was appointed to draft a constitution, with instructions to report back at the next meeting, two nights later. When this document, known as the Prescript, was brought in and read, those who listened to its provisions were treated to the most original and unique production that the history of secret fraternities can furnish. It was a huge joke—wild, fantastic, droll.

Even with the constitution adopted, the order, or society, or fraternity, or club, was nameless. Its only appellation was, * *. But for the ready fancy of the newspaper correspondent, who months afterward was shocked to learn that this mysterious power had a membership of twenty-five thousand men in Middle Tennessee, and hastened to invent suitable cognomens, the order would have been nameless forever. To this watch-dog of public and private morals and methods, not to the organization or its members, mankind is indebted for the names, "Ku-Klux Klan," "The Invisible Empire," "The Order of Pale Faces," "The Knights of the White Camelia," and a hundred others.

In this written Prescript, only one paragraph was serious in tone. That provided: First, that all the members should recognize and obey the Government of the United States; second, that they should protect the weak, especially women and children; third, that the members should stand together. An obligation, more facetious than formidable, closed the unusual document.

A ritual, prescribing ceremonies for initiation and other formal proceedings, was reported and adopted. After it had been read several times and its contents were well understood, the writing was burned with strange and ludicrous ceremony. From that hour the mysteries and secrets of the order lived only in the memory of men.

Whether the divulgence of these mysteries would redound to the honor or infamy of the hundreds of thousands who so faithfully carried them, is not a matter for consideration by the chronicler of this authentic history, especially as he has never been intrusted with so much as a hint at one of them. Yet millions of men and women, fortified with a like absence of knowledge, have dared to pass judgment, sweeping and conclusive. Be that as it may, mankind loves those who are faithful to a trust, and this countless and unknown brotherhood will be forever honored, in that it guarded its secrets to the end.

From this meeting the order spread until it encompassed those parts of the country that were under the heel of the oppressor. The success of this first effort, simple as it was, became known to every community in the terrorized South. Dens seemed to spring up spontaneously; no agents, no hired organizers, went from place to place urging men to join. Men flocked to the dreaded banner without stopping to enquire of its methods, or to consider where it would end. It had brought a degree of relief; it had checked the tidal wave of systematic iniquity — that was enough.

The people were worn out with persecutions; they were daily plundered by rapacious officers;

the negroes were becoming insolent, insulting, menacing, under the influence of these officers; anarchy threatened, and they were powerless to evade or to meet it. Shall we wonder that they grasped at this one mysterious straw? In their keenness for quiet, is it strange that they overlooked the possible abuses of their accidental creation? Shall those who builded under such a press of ill-treatment be blamed that they did not foresee that in the future, designing men, even the officers at Kosciusko, could make use of their fortuitous structure for infamous purposes?

However questionable its methods or practices, it quelled lawlessness, restored order and preserved it until Greed was thrown (or tumbled) from the saddle, and Justice resumed her sway. All this it did, and there are grave reasons to doubt if like results could have been attained by more open means.

With all its known and confessed weaknesses and abuses, the Order of the Two Stars did well its part. It protected the weak, especially defenseless women and children; it did more! It saved the South from anarchy.

XXXVI

IN WHICH THE DOCTRINE OF THE SADDUCEES IS UTTERLY CONFOUNDED

SARCELY had the members of the midnight circle congratulated themselves on their first success, when a new case appeared for treatment. As Howard Grayson led the work in the cotton rows one day, a fortnight after Eli had vanished, two negroes appeared at the farthest end of the field and had a few moments' talk with one of the hired hands. The suddenness with which they disappeared aroused his suspicion, and he called on Pleas to find out the mission of the two visitors. For once, Pleas acknowledged his ignorance, but he started forthwith to supply the lack.

It was a longer chase than he had expected; for the hands had become rather suspicious of the confidential servant. But he never gave up a hunt while there was scent in the track, and before he went to bed that night he found out that a general strike of the negroes had been ordered by the authorities at Kosciusko.

This was Thursday; all hands were directed to quit work on the following Monday morning.

The next day Pleas communicated this information to his young master; that night at a meeting of the Den, in the cave beneath the Bluff, the impending labor troubles and the resultant fees to the agent of the Freedmen's Bureau became pertinent subjects for consideration.

Saturday night and Sunday, the matter of Eli's disappearance was revived and discussed with great vigor. At Elmington, Pleas made it a point to have the negroes together, and led off with many new problems and complications in the mystery.

In other parts of the county, like agitation and discussion was going on. Whence came this revival of a subject which the colored people so much desired to have forgotten, nobody knew. It was seemingly spontaneous, and Pleas argued that it was but the precursor of more serious developments in the case.

Sunday morning broke into a heavy down-pour of rain, which continued throughout the day. By spells, thunder rolled heavily from a distance. Toward night, the wind blew up fresh and strong; the rain came down in floods. Pleas had all the negroes on the place, except Uncle Phil, packed into his cabin. It was fast coming dark, the wind whistled through the cracks and moaned in the trees overhead. The single candle fluttered and spluttered on its wooden bracket against the logs, and at times nearly parted with its slender flame. The remnant of the cook-fire flickered on the hearth.

Pleas was leading the conversation, and kept the mysterious affair of his friend, Eli, constantly to the fore. The subject seemed to weigh on his mind; he declared solemnly that he tried in vain to shake off the spell. After a ponderous clap of thunder that shook the building, and set the negroes to quaking, he said: "Err time dat ole thun'er smash, I thinks of Eli. He comes back; yo' hyear me talkin', he comes back. Mebbe in

de speret, mebbe in de rest-erection; but he comes. De Bible, hit say we mought be rest-erected right hyear; leastwise, Uncle Phil say so, an' he knows dat ole Bible-book, from en' to en'. I ast him 'bout hit yestiddy, an' he say, 'posseble,' 'posseble.' "

The heavy splash, splash of a horse's hoofs in front of the door put an end to these theological speculations. Before anyone could move, had they had the courage to stir, a famished, hoarse voice called, as if from out a great distance: "Pleas, yo' Pleas! water, water!"

"Eli," gasped Pleas, evidently too badly scared to make a move. But presently he recovered somewhat, and started toward the door. Meanwhile the voice from without kept moaning, "Water! water!" Pleas muttered: "Hit's Eli, shu."

The five negroes were imbecile with fright; they could only groan and call, "Gawd!"

Pleas jerked the door open. The first puff of wind extinguished the candle, leaving the room in darkness, save for the glimmer of coals in the fire-place. This flickered up with every gust of wind, making a fitful, uncertain light.

"Eli!" called Pleas timorously into the black night.

"Water! water!" came back the strained, husky voice from the darkness.

No sooner was the door ajar, than the horse charged to the opening, cutting off all hope of flight for the negroes within. One tumbled over on the floor in a swoon, two managed to get behind the door, while the other two rolled under

the bed. From these points of shelter they groaned, and shouted, and tried to pray.

And it is really no wonder, for the apparition that blocked the doorway would have startled the sturdiest nerve. The horse looked like a monster, and was covered with a white blanket that reached to the point of his nose and touched the ground on all sides, completely enveloping him. Holes were made for eyes and nostrils; but instead of ears, this demon's horse had a great horn, two feet long, in the center of his forehead. On such an animal was Eli mounted, without saddle or bridle.

And poor Eli! He was covered with an immense white mantle that flowed in shifting, rustling folds from the crown of his head to the ground. An opening was made for his face, and slashes in the sides gave freedom to his arms. Two black horns stood up threateningly on the top of his head; his fingers were fully twelve inches long, and each terminated in a point.

If the frightened negroes in the cabin did not note all of these details, each marked the face of their former friend—for there was no doubt in their minds but it was Eli. The black features were drawn and twisted with agony; his great white teeth shone to the last molar. And the wheezy voice kept calling, “Water! water!”

“Whar yo’ been at, Eli?” asked Pleas, hunting nervously about for his gourd.

“In Hell,” answered the supposed Eli, with painful shudderings. “Water! water! a bucket-fu.”

Pleas grasped the pail, dipped into the water

barrel that had stood under the dripping eaves all day, and passed it quickly to Eli. He turned it down almost at a gulp.

"Mo', mo'."

"Whar yo' been?" asked Pleas again, dipping up another bucketful.

"In Hell, I tells yo'. Water, mo' water."

Pleas dipped another pailful, and another, and a fifth, all of which Eli turned down without hesitation.

"I's burnin'; burnin' insides; mo' water!" cried the spectre.

From within the cabin came groans, shouts of "Oh, Gawd!" and prayers. Pleas worked like a whole fire department, passing up bucketful after bucketful, until the barrel was empty. The man on the horse cried, "Mo', mo'."

"Ain' no mo', Eli," said Pleas, puffing from exertion.

"I's burnin' insides; mo' water! Two weeks in Hell, day an' night. Look out fo' dat man-eater, Pleas. Tell all de colored gen'lemen 'bout 'im. Tell de boys to wuck, stiddy an' faithfu', or dey goes to Hell, shu'. Two hours out ter-night; mus' git back in dat time. Ain' yo' got no mo' water, Pleas? Oh, I's burnin'. I comes back nex' week, if de boys doan wuck." And with a coarse, unearthly yell, he started the horse, that whirled and rushed off into the darkness.

For an hour there was silence in the cabin, except for groans and prayers. Pleas alone had his senses. He kept muttering to himself: "Turrible, turrible, but I knowed Eli come to no good;

he was the lazies', mos' triflin' nigger in the worl'. He nerr would wuck."

When Howard came home, about ten o'clock, he looked in. They were before the little fire, jumping and shuddering at every sound. He listened attentively to the story from Pleas, and seemed horror-stricken at the details.

"Did he say he would come back?" asked Howard, when Pleas had finished his recital.

"Yas, suh, Mars Howard; spressly if we doan wuck, an' keep stiddy. Doan he say jes' so?" asked Pleas, appealing to his five companions.

"Yas, suh, Mars Howard. We wucks good," they all cried, for this seemed to be the only defense they could think of.

Pleas then related that Eli had grown a tail as big as a cow's, with an ugly spear on the end, and so long that it dragged on the ground. But he forgot to tell, if he knew, that this tail was a piece of rubber hose; that it was attached to a rubber bag under Eli's mantle; that the bag received the water by pailfuls, and the tail carried it off several yards to the ground, out of the range of the faint light.

"Well, there's no danger from Eli; he won't come back here, for I'm sure you all intend to work and stand to your contracts," said Howard, in a pacific tone. "He wants to warn those who are trifling and worthless. And he's right, too, boys; you all know that. Wish I had seen him, although he never did like me right well. Now go to bed, and get rested for to-morrow; the ground will be too soft to work in cotton, so we shall cut brush. Good-night, boys."

"We wucks good, Mars Howard." they all declared.

As Howard turned to go, Pleas noticed a black spot on the side of his neck, and called out: "Dare's a mud-splotter on de back yore naick, Mars Howard."

"Thank you, Pleas, I'll wash it off, when I get to my room."

It may have been mud; it may have been burnt cork. Who, besides Pleas, knows?

"Mars Howard been co'tin'," said Pleas, when his master was out of hearing. "Miss Margaret am a fine leddy; mighty fine. She's one we-all folks; she set gret sto' on Mars Howard. He go thar 'bout err evenin'."

Pleas seemed to think this explanation was necessary, lest some of his companions had noticed the spot on Howard's neck, and had drawn conclusions from it. His precaution was unnecessary; they were not in a mood to make deductions.

There was no general strike the next day. A few negroes quit work; but when they saw that they were in such a small minority, they returned. The officers at Kosciusko had a thin harvest from this effort. Several days passed before they knew the reason for the frustration of their plan; the colored men worked by day, and did not venture through the darkness to attend the League meetings at night. The financiers who had planned this master stroke, in the hope of being paid from five to twenty-five dollars for each negro who should be induced to return to work, became alarmed. They thought they were losing the

confidence of the black people; that the old relation of master and man was being restored, at least so far as influence was concerned.

But the Walking Delegates brought in the news, after a time. Then the officers saw that they were outwitted. They knew that the superstition of the negro was a strong element of his character; they learned later that it outweighed gratitude, patriotism, hunger, and revenge.

When the Grand Cyclops called the Den to order at its next meeting, a comparison of notes disclosed that Eli appeared at ten different places in the county that night, at precisely 8 o'clock.

Truly, his was an omnipresent spirit, for some of the places were separated by fifteen miles. No less than forty visits were made by him during his two hours' respite, and he spread terror to hundreds of evil-doers.

But Eli was not without consideration and compassion. He would have been glad to save these poor, deluded wretches their discomfort, and would have preferred to strike at the fountain-head of the iniquity—the official circle at Kosciusko, only this did not seem to be practicable. At least, that was asserted at the meeting of the Den, as Eli's honest sentiment. Those who knew, said he did what he could, not what he wanted to do.

Again the negroes were quiet. The conspirators, who lived to keep them in a ferment that gold might come from it, were forming new plans.

XXXVII

VANITY FAIR, DONE IN COLORS

SINCE the pioneers from Virginia and North Carolina came over the Blue Ridge Mountain, and founded a new commonwealth, First Monday has been a holiday. On this day County Court sits; and magistrates, one from each Civil District, who compose this formidable tribunal, ride to the county seat, there to consider, smoke upon, and sometimes dispatch the weighty public affairs that come up for disposition or delay. In an early day, when the court was first established, the allowance of bounties for wolf-scalps and other like ponderous matters engaged the deliberations of this numerous bench. Latterly, since the wolf has passed from life to history, equally pressing demands of modern civilization serve to keep this body serious and contemplative.

Not only do the judges of this court ride to the county seat the first Monday of each month, but since the earliest days of Tennessee as a State, this day has been kept inviolate for family marketing, horse trading, collecting and paying debts, telling stories and anecdotes. No institution is more firmly established in Tennessee than First Monday; no custom more sacredly observed.

When the officers of the Freedmen's Bureau reformed the labor contracts at the time of the first strike, they incorporated a provision that the negroes should have First Monday for a holiday.

And this was not bad; why should not the colored brother enjoy all the privileges and advantages of civilization, especially as he soon was to become a full-fledged citizen? There was yet another reason for this magnanimous provision: large numbers of peddlers and hawkers were coming down from the North, offering all sorts of wares to the Freedmen, and paying large sums to these officers for privilege licenses. These enterprising dealers could not reach the negroes by day, for they were in the field; the evening assemblages were too small and poor for profitable business. The income from privilege tax was threatened, and it was no inconsiderable source of revenue for the Carpet-Baggers. Accordingly, it was arranged not only that the colored people should have this holiday, but that they should be paid off the morning of their frolic.

This wise and considerate enactment put into the public square at Kosciusko, every First Monday, hundreds of negroes from all parts of the surrounding country, each with a sum of money in his pocket. This made a rich field for hawkers, and privilege taxes went kiting, even to twenty-five dollars for the day.

County Court day, First Monday, for July, the second since the laborers' contracts were reformed, opened auspiciously for the vendors of licenses, for there was a cordon of wagons and platforms on both sides of the oblong square. The black mass of negro humanity within the commercial rampart promised a good harvest to the peddlers.

Entering at the northeast corner of the open,

one came first upon a light spring wagon, painted red, white, and blue. The proprietor stood on a seat, calling and waving his hands lustily to attract his share of the crowd. He wore an old silk hat upon the back of his head, had his whiskers cut after the pattern of Abraham Lincoln; and, aside from outlandish taste in dress, somewhat resembled the picture of the martyred President. His cravat was in national colors. Surely he was a patriotic man; those who flaunt the flag most vulgarly, pass for patriots. After this individual had drawn a reasonable crowd by voice and gyration, he unfolded his licensed mission as follows: "Ladies and gentlemen! my name is Smith; I am a Yankee from Connecticut, come down here as a representative of the great and good Government that has set you free. I am here to do you each and all a great benefit. I love my colored brethren; I am anxious to get them settled in life. You know that this Southern country is all yours; these farms all belong to you, and very soon the Government is coming down here to divide these lands among you. You have heard of that before, but I am here direct from Washington and want to tell you that the time will soon be up. These old Rebels who have whipped, and kicked, and cuffed you for a thousand years back, are all going to be driven out. 'De marster run, ha, ha, de darky stay, ho, ho,' will be exactly true. Now, this is your country, remember that. But when the Government comes down here to divide this land, how are they to know what land you want? The Government is very busy and you must do all

you can to help them out; you must be ready for them. There is only one way: Just stake off your land, with authorized stakes, and when the Government comes, you will get your title. The Government will have no time to survey and drive stakes. I am right straight from Washington, and while there I bought a lot of registered stakes, the only kind that the Government will recognize. I bought them at a bargain, I have the inside track through General Grant."

The orator stopped for breath, and held up two common wood stakes, about an inch square and a foot long, pointed at one end. They were painted red, white and blue, like diminutive barber-poles.

"Now, ladies and gentlemen, I will tell you how to use them. Go out anywhere and pick out forty acres of the best land you can find; no matter where it is, no odds who claims to own it. Drive down a stake at each corner, and when the Government comes, this forty acres will be yours; for no old Rebel will interfere with you; these Rebels are afraid of stakes from Washington. The price of these beautiful red, white and blue, painted, sandpapered and varnished stakes, is only one dollar. These, like the one I hold in my left hand, having the picture of Father Abe on it, are only one dollar and fifty cents each. Remember these are the only registered stakes outside of Washington; they are cheap at five dollars each. Now, ladies and gentlemen, you see I am here to help the poor colored people to get rich. Who will buy the first stake?" A very black negro, standing near the wagon, cried, "I, suh; gimme fo'."

"Do you want one with the picture of our dear murdered President on it?" asked the philanthropist.

"Yas, suh; I wans dat fo' de main co'ner," answered the first purchaser, who proved to be a stranger and was in all probability a hired decoy.

"A wise brother," shouted the merchant in the wagon. "The colored brother is learning how to get rich. Keep right on, dear brother; keep right on, and you will be as rich as Croesus, some day. Now, ladies and gentlemen, who next?"

He did a large business; before noon every stake was sold out of his wagon, and he drove back to the railroad station where he had a carload, and replenished his stock.

Just below his wagon, on a raised platform, was a voodoo doctor openly practicing his nefarious craft. He had in his pocket a license, bearing the name of the county clerk and the seal of the County of Williams. The exercise of this diabolical trade was prohibited by every civilized government in the world, except the business administration of the South.

A little further down was another democrat wagon, and the strong-lunged occupant was dis coursing on hoop-skirts.

"Here, ladies, are your great American, Mrs. Lincoln, hoop-skirts. I call them the Mrs. Lincoln hoop-skirts; and why? because they are made on the pattern worn by the widow of your dear deliverer. Here is a letter from Mrs. Lincoln endorsing my hoop-skirts. She says they are the latest style and that she approves of them. You can't trust your merchants down here; they are

all Rebels. They won't sell you hoop-skirts, anyway. I am from Indiana, where every lady, black and white, wears hoop-skirts. If these Rebels get control of this country again they won't let you colored ladies wear hoop-skirts; they will make it against the law. But we are running this country. Now, who will be the first to buy one of these beautiful skirts? Only two dollars and a half each; worth five or six dollars." While keeping a running fire of this commercial eloquence, the fellow did a large business. His goods were worthless; but they had red bands and brass buckles, and sold rapidly.

Next came a fright, in personal appearance. His blonde hair hung in pipe-stem curls half-way down his back; he wore a great white sombrero, with wide, flaring brim. "Here's your face and hands bleach, ladies and gents. This wonderful preparation is warranted to change the color of your skin from black to white. It's made 'way up in Vermont, by a secret and wonderful process. It is endorsed by General Grant, President Johnson, and your Governor. The preachers all over the country declare it is wonderful stuff. I can't tell you all about its make, but I'll tell you a little. Away up in Vermont the swamp-elm trees grow very big, as wide across as my buggy box is long. We cut down a tree, scoop out the top of the stump until it will hold about half a barrel of water. On Friday night, the last Friday in the month, in the dark of the moon, a terrible thunder-storm comes up, and the rain falls into this scooped-out place and fills it plumb full. If the lightning strikes a tree

within one hundred yards of this stump, we know that the water is perfect. We let the water stand in the stump until the thirteenth day of the next month, then we dip it out carefully, so as to make no blubbers, and submit it to a secret process. Now that I have told you honestly and truthfully about my wonderful bleach, who will be the first to buy? Only one dollar for one of these beautiful bottles of this wonderful bleach. Ah, thank you lady. Who next?"

Business rolled in on this benefactor of a race of despised color, but he found time to continue his harangue. "These Rebels hate you because you are black. They won't let you marry white men and women, simply because you are black. Use my wonderful bleach, and then you can marry anybody. Just as good for gentlemen as it is for ladies. Five bottles are warranted to change the blackest skin to pure white, and leave nice red cheeks into the bargain. One dollar per bottle, five bottles, with my picture thrown in, for five dollars."

As an evidence of good faith, this enterprising fellow took the names of all who bought. He promised to come and see them the following First Monday, and feared he should not recognize them as white persons.

Then came a woman, in fantastic dress, selling love potions. The stuff, whatever it was, came in three papers, like doctor's powders, only the wrappers were red, white and blue. She promised, on her word of honor as a lady, that these powders would conquer the most obstinate person living, "And without any regard to color," she

cried. "For instance, you are a colored lady and love some gent. All you have to do is to give him the powder in the red paper, and before the end of twenty-four hours he will love you. But before giving the red powder to him, you must take the blue powder yourself. When all is lovely, mix the white powder in water, and both drink of it; then you will love forever. Oh, love, love! that makes the world go round! Only fifty cents for the three! Who next? Come up ladies and gentlemen; be happy, be happy!" This creature sold a bushel of these powders.

On the other side of the square there was a no less choice collection of merchandisers.

"Warranted to cure rheumatism, gentlemen!" shouted one from the top of an overturned goods box. "You have all had that tired pain in your arms and legs, especially in the morning after a hard day's work. That is rheumatism. I had it for twenty years; I now carry this little brown charm in my pocket and have not had an ache or pain since." The charm was a nut from the buckeye tree. Strange as it may seem, this faker sold great quantities of these worthless nuts. at fifty cents each.

From a spring wagon near the rheumatism doctor came a mighty voice: "Ladies and gentlemen, I am the discoverer of a wonderful hair straightener and bleach. My name is Professor Mc Iwen, and I come from Washington, the home of Abraham Lincoln. This beautiful lady that you see sitting in my wagon," pointing to a rather flashy looking person, of the variety described by a great American humorist as "saleratus blonde," "this

lady once had hair as black and kinky as any of you. Did n't you, Arabella?" Arabella nodded assent. "My hair bleach and straightener did the business. Did n't it, Arabella?" Again Arabella nodded approval. "And ladies and gentlemen, it's only one dollar per bottle. Come up! Come up!! Come up!!! and buy the only Professor Mc Iwen's straightener and bleach." The presence of the fair Arabella seemed to help trade. She took in the money, smiling patronizingly on every black face that brought its dollar.

Next came the vendor of halter-straps. He had a choice collection of straps, of proper length, with a brass-plated snap on the end. "You know, gentlemen, that you are to have a mule to go with that forty acres of land. How can you lead him away after the Government has given him to you? Not with a rope, for these Rebels would take him away from you. These elegant straps came from Washington, right out of Congress building. Every old Rebel knows them; every old Rebel trembles when he sees them. Buy one for your mule; you will have to have it. Only one dollar to-day; two dollars after sun-down to-night. The Supreme Court of this great Government has decided these halter-straps good and valid. Get ready for the great mule division! Who next? who next?"

In a rusty tent sat a twisted crone, made up to look old and wrinkled like the proverbial witch. From a cracked scrap of looking-glass she was reading the destinies of such of the poor, ignorant blacks as her "business agent," who stood in front of the swinging flaps, could induce to pay one dollar for a forecast. She had no word of

discouragement; the future for all was bright and roseate. Farm laborers who could neither read nor write were promised judgeships, the rank of major-general, or seats in Congress—each according to his desire. The wealth of the globe was freely pledged; the negro was already inoculated with the virus of our civilization, before he had come to full participation, and had taken on a desire to own and control things, and a mania for money. The direct and positive assurances of this chartered impostor brought her enormous business; the poor people anxiously awaited their turn to be swindled.

A fitting neighbor to this charlatan was Professor Bumper, who declared that he was the most celebrated, world-renowned, much-sought-after phrenologist, living or dead. That was his statement, and no person stood up to challenge the claim. After a long and tiresome discourse on the beauties and advantages of the exact science that had claimed the best years of his life, he induced a few woolly heads to be examined, and wrote out charts of great intellectual promise. The ever-duped negroes paid two dollars for each of these performances, although not one of the investors could read the diagram of his mental possibilities.

There was a plenty of other swindlers and fakers; there was not an honest enterprise under license. The legal guardian of the negro, the National Government, was asleep; the agent of this guardian had yielded to temptation; the natural guardian, the white man of the South, was helpless, voiceless.

In the face of scenes like those enacted at Kosciusko, and scores of other Southern cities in those dark days, the beautiful old allegory of Christian and Faithful becomes weak and pointless. The scurvy traffic set up by Beelzebub, Apollyon and Legion, in the dream-made City of Vanity, was eclipsed in a hundred places in our own fair land. Poor John Bunyan! The utmost flight of his magnificent fancy was discredited a thousand times by Carpet-Bagger ingenuity!

Very few negroes carried any money from the public square on the evening of the second general holiday. Yet the press of the North exploited the parental foresight that had provided to the poor freedmen one day in each month for frolic.

After the close of a successful day of merchandising, the imposters, in company with their co-conspirators, the officers, betook themselves to a meeting of the League. They all were members. And such of the colored people as had the hardihood to go out after night, got much valuable advice and instruction from the visiting brethren.

At midnight the drowsy old town of Kosciusko had resumed its normal state, and was sound asleep. Everything was quiet. Nor did the ten men in fantastic, flowing robes, each riding a horse with muffled feet and blanket reaching to the ground, disturb the general quiet. They awakened only a few of the occupants in the old hotel. But such of the trafficking knaves as were driving through the country practicing their infamous trades from wagons, found, when they had dressed with the help of the masked men, their horses geared and waiting at the door. The

women were not disturbed. Those who were not provided with conveyances were invited to take seats; and the whole cavalcade moved out of the town toward the North, under guard of the ten mysterious horsemen. Not a word was spoken; the captives made no show of indiscretion. Three miles out the leader of the escort delivered a short address, which the other nine repeated in unison, like responsive reading. They advised the swindlers to betake themselves to their old fields, and never again to return to Kosciusko, for fear of inciting the wrath of the Mystic Den of the * *. This wholesome advice closed with the chorus: "So says the Grand Cyclops, and he must be obeyed."

Towards morning a bonfire broke out on the square, but the town did not awake. The next day, as the men met to whittle sticks and discuss the affairs of First Monday, they were attracted by a pile of reeking ashes. Nobody seemed to understand it. "Some mischievous urchins have been burnin' goods boxes, I reckon," said one. But when they saw the charred butts of some painted stakes, a few brass-plated snaps, masses of molten glass and a dozen buckeyes about the suburbs of the recent conflagration, they allowed that something might have happened during the night.

The negroes had defenders, or rather avengers; and vengeance is often the most available substitute for defense.

XXXVIII

IN WHICH THE * * EXTENDS ITS BENEFICENT OPERATIONS

THE moral effect of this, the first systematic raid of Mystic Den, was remarkable. The absolute secrecy of the expedition, the wonderful precision of movement, the mystery of numbers and personnel, the daring of the enterprise in conception and execution, more than all else, the perfect and harmonious success of the whole affair, showed an unknown master-hand that few were ready to cope with. The fame of the invasion spread like gossip; people began to ask one of another: "Where do these spooks come from? Who leads them?" No one could tell. Only ten men in the world knew, and they have never spoken. The most intimate friends, even the families of the participants in that brief adventure, never knew the names of those who rode in the silent escort.

To the ten this incomprehensible property was a source of some satisfaction, and perhaps, of inward pride. In fact, the thing was getting too good to keep, so they agreed to extend the membership. Numbers judiciously selected would add strength, both in suggestion and performance—a hundred men of proper quality could be trusted as well as ten. Accordingly, at the next meeting of the Den, each member suggested the name of a friend, and then and there the community was doubled.

From that night the meetings lost their informality; henceforth full and elaborate ceremony was observed. Members lost their individuality; the name of no man was spoken. All were disguised; neither face nor form could be recognized under the flowing gown of the order. Thus the accident that first invented and played a trick to keep the negroes from carousing at night, now became a serious business; it was a wonderful power; it made history, and restrained many a foul act that otherwise would have polluted the page of history.

Conscious of strength, the members began to consider methods for regulating all the abuses that were reported. But remedies were not always at hand; plan as they would, only a small proportion of the cases were met. The ingenuity of the Carpet-Baggers for creating outrage, exceeded their genius for defense.

The meeting at which the membership was increased, was otherwise an important one. After the strange ceremony of initiation had been enacted, and the order, "Protection of Women and Children" was called, several instances of flagrant insults to ladies from the negroes were related. The word dropped by Felix Grayson to the negro woman, Maria, had brought abundant harvest. Ladies had been driven from the sidewalk into the gutter, had been jeered and hooted at on the street, and were daily suffering other indignities. In every case the negroes were well known; there was no danger of mistaken identity. In fact, four negro men seemed to have been detailed to administer these humiliations.

During the discussion that followed, one rather tall young man arose and said; "May it please the Grand Cyclops to listen to the humble suggestion of a faithful Ghoul! These poor, ignorant blacks are not to blame for this conduct, bad as it is; they are but the tools of designing men. We ought, if possible, to reach the source of all this infamy — the cowardly officials at Kosciusko. Surely the negroes will have to be checked, or they will make this country uninhabitable for white people, except of a certain stripe and kidney. But their punishment ought to be incidental. Let's first try and reach the power that invents and incites all this deviltry; we can attend to Cuffy any time."

"Will the White Gown suggest, not generalize?" asked the Grand Cyclops.

"I can't quite make out how to do what it seems to me ought to be done. Can not some Ghoul here tell us some way of getting at the powers at Kosciusko?" appealed the first speaker.

"Duck 'em in the Creek," cried another, from behind his mask.

"That never would do; we must keep our watercourses clear," said the Grand Cyclops.

"The suggestion of the Ghoul that first spoke is very humane, but it's not sense. We can get at those fellows in Kosciusko quickest and best through the negroes. Already this circle has cut off three-fourths of the abuses, simply by operating on the blacks. Let's follow up our previous successes; we're working along proper lines. These loafers that spend their time standing on street corners for the purpose of insulting and

terrorizing our ladies, know better. All they need is to have their memory jogged a little, and then they will realize what they know already, namely: This is the white man's country. That done, we shall have no further trouble on the score. I propose, may it please the Grand Cyclops, that these negroes who are known beyond a doubt to be offenders, be given ten lashes each."

"Ten lashes each, is the decree," said the Grand Cyclops, in a sepulchral tone.

"Ten lashes each, is the decree," repeated twenty muffled voices.

Two nights after this, eight horsemen, accoutred as the ten were on the night following First Monday, rode silently into Kosciusko, and straight to the cabins in which the four offenders lived. They took the negroes from their beds, and without ado carried them to the outskirts of the town, where each was given a lecture in two parts: first, on the predominance of the white man; second, on the crime of an insult from a black man to a white woman. Then the decree of the Den was executed in most parental manner.

This was the first case of corporal punishment inflicted by the * *. It was done to save the South for a white man's country. It was done in the name of Home. The crime thus avenged was enormous, not so much in the act, as in the precedent, for if it had been left unchecked it would have resulted in social overthrow for the Section. The punishment was unauthorized by law, but it was inadequate justice.

For weeks after this incident matters moved quietly. Negroes under contract stayed at their work. The Union League was mighty near deserted, save by the loafers who refused to bind themselves by contract, and lived on the meagre bounty of the Freedmen's Bureau. This latter class had been relied upon to do odd jobs and dirty work for the officers, but since the operations of the Silent Army, they had become confirmed vagabonds—they would not work, even for the men who gave them scanty rations.

The officers once more attempted to bring about a strike, and failing of this, they began a systematic effort to conquer the superstition of the negro. For immediate results, they undertook new fields of enterprise; they gave more attention to State politics.

XXXIX

ANOTHER GLIMPSE AT HOME LIFE

INVITATIONS were issued for a quiet wedding at Saunders' Lodge. They were not elaborate, nor expensive; they even were not engraved, but were written in a plain, readable hand by Mary Lou. Civilization had not then reached that advanced stage when to have one's handwriting read was a positive disgrace.

The Graysons, the Lewises, the Bosworths, and three other families were honored with these modest missives. Captain Avery was asked on the special request of Howard, and as a compromise with Mr. Dodge, who wanted to have present the whole kit and boodle of authority at Kosciusko. He wanted to show them "How we do business down here in the South."

In spite of Mr. Dodge, the event was the very refinement of simplicity. Again every Southern gentleman present declared, on his favorite expletive, that the bride was the most beautiful that ever stood at the altar. And they all meant it, too. Major Lewis was especially eloquent. Avery protested, in an aside to Mary Lou, that he knew of only one young lady in the land who could excel Margaret in bridal loveliness, but he was not asked to name that person.

Ranged back of the white guests, like a black fringe, were Pleas, Uncle Phil, Aunt Manda, and old Uncle Sam. Aunt Manda kissed both bride

and groom; Uncle Phil distinguished himself with several fervent responses of "Ahman." These he did not bestow with perfect knowledge of the printed ceremony, but he made good with Methodist zeal and Episcopalian accent.

For this occasion the Grayson family jewels were raised from the bottom of Opal Creek, where they were deposited early in the war by Uncle Phil, and were divided equally between Margaret and Mary Lou. The latter made her protest, serious and honest, insisting that Margaret should have them all; but the division stood.

Contrary to custom, the bride bestowed upon the groom a gift, unique and rare. In the presence of the assembled company, Margaret delivered to Howard the sealed envelope that had so long been in the keeping of Mary Lou. On being opened, it was found to contain the long-lost deed from Mr. Dodge to Margaret, executed in Canada, and a like conveyance from her to Howard Grayson. The latter instrument was acknowledged at Atlanta, Georgia, in November, 1862. There was a brief letter enclosed, but this was not displayed. It ran:

"My dear Howard:—

Please keep Mother's grave sacred, and never let it pass into the neglect of strangers. This is the last wish of your
Margaret."

When Mr. Dodge saw the deeds he cried: "Ah, Howard, just the very thing! You remember I told you as much, six weeks ago; there is your title. John Dodge always keeps his word, yes, siree! This will make a fine addition to Elmington; just what you need. But Margaret

played it on her father; yes, yes. Oh, she's her father's daughter; she's smart. I congratulate you again, Howard, my son! This has been a good business stroke for you; always keep your eyes open for a good business stroke. I suppose you will let me stay here a little time; you won't throw me out this evening?"

"There will be no change here," said Howard, thoughtfully. "I don't quite understand this matter; but I reckon Margaret has plans, and being a married man, I must consult my wife."

"That's right, Howard, that's right; always consult your wife. That's the way I used to do, and things went pleasantly at Saunders' Lodge. The man who don't consult his wife is in trouble, then and there. Women like to have a man running to them for advice; it makes them feel important. Of course, they have no advice to give; they always say, 'Do as you think best, my dear,' but that is a big consolation; yes, siree. If I do well when I get up North again, I'll give you and Margaret the whole plantation; and it's as good as yours to-day, for I shall make money up there. Lots of business up there, and such a climate! You ought to see that climate! No biliousness up there. It saved my life in '61."

Mr. Dodge monopolized the conversation for two hours, but the substance of his utterances is already recorded.

When Avery was preparing to take leave, he said to Mary Lou: "May I call to see you tomorrow afternoon; and can we have one more of those old-time rides? I have new orders and shall soon be leaving this part of the country."

"You to leave Williams County, Captain Avery? We-all shall miss you from our narrow, little lives. I hope you are not going soon?"

"Very soon, if I remain in the service. After hearing Mr. Dodge discourse on the value of ladies' advice, I decided to ask you for some."

"Oh, I warn you that we women advise entirely from the point of our interest, or whim. Major Lewis says we have no interests, only whims, and I believe he is right. We shall be glad to see you at Elmington to-morrow; Margaret and Howard will be there."

"Can't we have just one more ride?"

"That is delightfully plaintive, for a soldier, and a fierce Yankee soldier, at that. Let me tell you, Captain Avery, we girls love to be pleaded with more than to be advised with. Perhaps we may ride; don't ask me to promise so far ahead."

Not daunted by this pleasantry, Captain Avery appeared before Elmington the following day, mounted on a hired horse and leading Pomp for Mary Lou. She made several flimsy excuses, expressly to see if the Captain would have the courage to attack and demolish them. Howard and Margaret finally came to the rescue, and sent Mary Lou to dress for the ride, for Avery was showing signs of defeat.

"Your brother is a very happy man," said Avery, to start the conversation.

"Why should he not be? Margaret is the sweetest and best thing on earth! She is just perfect; I would not change one thing in her, if I could. Beautiful, bright, stylish, sweet-tempered, resolute; what else could one ask?"

"She is all you claim, except the sweetest thing on earth. I know another who has all the graces, and adds one more quality — an artistic nature."

"A Yankee, I reckon?"

"Well, no, not exactly a Yankee," answered Avery, quick to grasp what he thought was an advantage. "Wish she were a Yankee; perhaps she would not treat me so contemptuously, if she were."

"Oh, Margaret has a highly artistic temperament; that is what I mean by *stylish*," said Mary Lou, affecting not to notice his last remark. "Why were you trying to shock us yesterday evening by saying that you were going away?"

"I meant exactly what I said, Miss Mary Lou," answered Avery, bluntly. "I either go or resign from the service. I tried a year ago to consult with you about resigning, but you only made sport of me. I don't like to go from here; I have been happy here; happier at Elmginton with you poking fun at me for my misfortune in having been born a Yankee, than in any other place in the world."

"I never 'poke fun,' as you call it, at your misfortunes. Besides, I never thought you were ashamed of your birth-land. I thought you proud of the hustle, as Mr. Dodge calls it, of your people. I thought you hated Rebels, one and all. You flatter some of us, just to be agreeable, but you don't like us."

"That is where you are mistaken, pardon the flat contradiction. A soldier loves a manly foe more than he does a dog of a comrade. After

all, I begin to think that men are better than political principles. But I don't want to go away; I can't do it. I believe I'll just settle down here at Kosciusko, and quit the service."

"And become sheriff? That would be well; we shall then have a more honorable officer."

"More honorable?" he asked.

"Pardon me, entirely honorable, I am sure."

Avery now discovered that he was again becoming entangled in Mary Lou's badinage, but he seemed helpless to straighten the skein. Every effort to lead the conversation to a point from which he could make a declaration in natural and easy sequence, was unavailing. She did not appear to be aware of the trend of his purpose; she evidently thought him flirting, and fenced him back as one who preferred not to meet him on open ground. This drove him to desperation, and forgetting all premeditated plans, he launched bluntly into the subject. He declared his love fervently and eloquently; then zeal took full possession of his faculties, and he argued it all out, before yielding for an answer. There was a touch of despair in his impassioned appeal — a brute fury against conscious defeat — that was pathetic.

It was some moments before Mary Lou could trust herself to speak, although the great expanse of his harangue had given her abundant time to recover from the shock of surprise.

"This revelation pains me more than I can tell, Captain Avery. I never thought it; believe me, never once. Am I to blame? What have I been doing?"

"Then you hate me, as I feared!"

"No! No! Please don't do me that injustice. But there is a wide space between hate and —and—love, for friendship—for horse-back rides, for light talk, and—and flirtations."

"No, be frank; you hate me because I'm a Yankee!" he said, almost savagely.

"On the contrary, Captain Avery, you are personally very agreeable to me," she answered, gently. "In your presence I sometimes forget that you are one of the thousands that were trying for four years to kill my brother."

"You could not love a Yankee?" he insisted.

"A woman never loves but once; I can not say that I ever loved a Yankee."

"But your brother cherishes no resentment."

"Nor do I, very much; although the women of the South are not so forgiving as our men. We are more narrow; we never had the chance to 'fight it out,' as brother says."

"Then I may not even love you?"

"I think best that you do not." And there was resolution in that quiet answer.

"Shall we have any more rides, before I go?"

"If we can ride with a perfect understanding, I do not object. On second thought, perhaps it were better not; I can not answer that now."

They did not ride again. Mary Lou gave him the answer as he left Elmington that evening. The next day, he was gone.

Mary Lou complained of a headache after her ride and took to her room. Nor did she recover the next day, nor the day following that. It was a fierce struggle; but, for the time, the spirit of the South prevailed.

XL

ANOTHER ABUSE IS CORRECTED

THE summer had passed; the corn was laid by; cotton picking was at hand. This particular time of year was the happiest of all, in the olden days. The negro always sang at his work, whether planting, thinning-out or hoeing; but the song of picking time was a brighter, cheerier melody. Then the work went more rapidly, in fact it was the only season of rush on the plantation, for the staple once ready for gathering must be quickly taken from the dead plant or an ill day will ruin the whole product.

This was the golden period for a strike; the officers at Kosciusko were quick to discover such an opportunity. A dozen black vagabonds were sent through the county by twos, to spread among the negroes the order to lay off from work.

The second day of their pilgrimage, each pair found hospitable entertainment wherever they chanced to be at evening; they found themselves honored guests, although their arrival was apparently unannounced.

Pleas came upon the two that delivered the message to the hands at Elmington, seemingly by the veriest chance, and insisted that they stay and help at the feast of 'possum, the catch of the night before. That Pleas, whom the colored men thought a spy and informer, should suddenly

turn host, did not militate against the prospective dinner, nor suggest a suspicion of motive to the weary delegates. That they were hospitably received, when those to whom they brought messages did not like to be seen having speech with them, did not excite their mistrust. They only remembered that they were hungry for 'possum, and that since they had existed on the meagre bounty of the Federal Government, their appetites for this and all other negro luxuries had grown painfully abnormal.

To half-fed negroes, Pleas's entertainment was sumptuous. Had they been less ravenous, they would have noticed that a portion of the food must have come from the great house. But they were too content to be analytical, and it was quite dark when the last bone was tossed into the fireplace and they started for home.

On some pretense of caution, the crafty host had blown out the light; and when the cabin door was opened there shone on the middle panel two stars of four prongs each, somewhat resembling two letters K. These symbols seemed to burn and glow bright and clear in the darkness. Consternation took the whole party, and they refused to go out. Pleas affected to be as badly scared as any of them, but he managed to whisper:—

"H'ist de winder; crawl out dat way. Caint stay hyear; 'tain' safe."

They managed to crawl through the window, and once outside quickly left the cabalistic writing behind. Pleas guided them through the house-lot to the pike, and bade the two disturbers good-

night, and they started off down the road on their three-mile tramp to town. They had no fear, beyond the ever-present superstition of their race; they had quite forgotten the secret order; it had not ridden for some weeks, and the disappearance of Eli had become a legend. They thought themselves safe as soon as they were outside of Pleas's cabin, and trudged toward home without concern.

But alas for human calculation ! Scarcely were they well on the road, when they met four men on horseback, robed and accoutered after the frightful fashion of the midnight raiders. Not a word was spoken; the two negroes stood shaking of terror; the horsemen made room, two turning out on either side. But when they came quite abreast of the affrighted negroes the riders suddenly became monsters. These men on horseback, who seemed at first to be of average height, shot instantly upward until their heads were full eight feet above their horses' backs. Accompanying this movement came an unearthly yell.

The horses stopped; a heavy, guttural voice said: "All negroes must stop in their cabins at night !" And three other heavy, guttural voices echoed in perfect unison: "In—their—cabins; so—says—the—Grand—Cyclops—and—he—must be—obeyed." And the giant horsemen rode on, leaving the black men on their knees, praying and pleading for mercy.

The other agitators had similar experiences in different parts of the county.

Some people believe to this good day that this incident was a systematic and organized raid by

the Order of the Two Stars. Be that as it may, the strike failed; cotton picking proceeded energetically and uninterruptedly. The crop was small, but it was saved. The colored men who had worked for a share closed the season with a good sum to show for their summer's toil, thanks to the interposition of the secret order. For had they followed the instructions of their legal guardians, their crop more than once would have been spoiled, unless the white men had paid the penalty exacted.

As it was, the negroes had little left; the officers were plentiful in schemes for getting their last dollar. If the poor, ignorant ward did not buy some worthless trash from the licensed swindlers that swarmed the country, or refused to take a chance in the enticing game of "craps," he was induced to deposit his savings with the Freedmen's Savings and Trust Company, an illegal bank, chartered by Congress. A branch of this illicit enterprise was established at Nashville, and Sheriff Streeter was the agent in Kosciusko.

On the cover of the pass-book of this incorporated infamy was printed this topical legend: "This Benevolent institution is under the charter of Congress, and has received the commendation and countenance of President Lincoln." Seventy-two thousand deluded men under Governmental guardianship put their savings into this wretched trap. When the ends for which it was chartered were fully attained, the befooled depositors had four hundred dollars in Government bonds, the only available asset, to show for nearly two millions of savings. All the rest had been stolen

outright, or under the flimsy guise of loans on real and personal property. One patriotic and philanthropic person, blessed with the one virtue of the times — vulgarly called a “pull” — had borrowed fifty thousand dollars of this blood-money on the pledge of his household furniture. Others, more favored, were not embarrassed by being asked for security. Political favorites and patriotic dead-beats got the savings; the men of respectability and wealth who lent their names to the business as directors and trustees, played the “baby act” — they knew nothing about it — and their prominence and influence saved them from having to make the poor justice of restitution.

And when the Southern people raised a voice against the organization of this alleged bank; when they protested against its branches doing business in the different States (for by its charter it could not go outside the District of Columbia), they were shouted down by the one cry of the times: “Rebels! Rebels!”

Few other disturbances were had; the negroes remained quiet; the officers were busy with State politics. An occasional arrest on a trumped-up charge was made, but the Southern man had come to care little for that. The officers seemed to tire of petty earnings; they had enterprises in prospect of too great magnitude to justify them in giving a day’s time to impose and collect a ten-dollar fine. The operations of the midnight raiders had rendered ineffective all attempts to extort money in large sums by the use of the negroes.

XLI

IN WHICH KOSCIUSKO IS THREATENED WITH GREAT PROSPERITY

TO the astonishment of all his friends, Mr. Dodge packed his trunk and started North in search of more active business. He had nothing definite in view; he simply longed for commercial conquest. For months he had tried to break into the official circle at Kosciusko, after noting its unusual opportunities for business; but the ring was complete and harmonious; there was no room for him.

At Nashville, where he stopped off for some days to air his views on important matters, he came into companionship with a Mr. Ashmore—J. Phillip Ashmore, Chicago, the enamelled card announced. This gentleman was in Tennessee looking after, or “working up,” as he styled it, a railroad contract. The magnificence of his project, and the graceful volubility with which he threw off large figures in setting it forth, enthralled the ambitious Dodge, who quickly became his disciple.

The proposed railroad was to split Williams County in twain, from east to west, in its majestic course from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Kosciusko was to become the most important station on the line between its oceanic terminals, the location of its principal office, the seat of all its gigantic operations. Of course, all this was on paper.

Like all the great schemes that were being put to nest, the Capital of the State was its main office, the General Assembly its field of active operations. The bonus had to be arranged for; the charter had to be voted.

This enormous enterprise had started during the last days of the preceding session of the Legislature, and little headway had been made before adjournment. But, thanks to the patriotic spirit that was then rampant, a large number of the members had subserved personal interests to public weal, and had remained in Nashville through the short recess in order to become thoroughly informed on this and other like undertakings. Mr. Ashmore had devoted several weeks to the instruction of these statesmen, and had already invested three-fourths of his promotion capital in educating and persuading them. And now, at the time of his chance acquaintance with Mr. Dodge, he only awaited the reassembling of the Legislature for the formal ratification of his project; the terms of the bonus were agreed to by the leaders of both bodies; the charter was written.

But strange to say, for all the prospective millions involved, for all his enormous investment in dinners, wines and unmentionable entertainments for legislators, Mr. Ashmore had never been south of Nashville. He spoke confidently of his preliminary survey, as if it had been a thing more serious than a man riding through the country on horseback. Yet, on the report of a holiday canter, by a man drawing two dollars per day and expenses, the financier had caused to

be made maps and drawings that would have converted the most apathetic to the necessity of building his road. When the guardian statesmen had been suitably prepared for the exhibition, and were brought to contemplate those magnificent elevations and profiles, they wondered how the great Commonwealth had so long maintained her place in geography without the Atlantic, Kosciusko and Pacific Railroad, Iron and Coal Company.

These maps were so plain and simple ! True, they had elaborate yellow borders, but that did not detract from their veracity. The sweeping rivers were in dark blue, the twisting creeks in light blue, mountain ranges in fuzzy black streaks, roads and turnpikes in pink, iron ore beds in brown splatters, coal layers in red blots, timber in purple, and cotton and corn land in green. Nothing was concealed; everything stood out as plainly as the dome on the old State House.

And yet, the master-mind had never been in Kosciusko, the very centre of all his prospective development. He had never seen the ground on which the depot, freight house and office buildings were to be erected. Mr. Dodge was practical; he proposed to introduce the creator to his own enterprise.

Accordingly, the two appeared one fine morning at Kosciusko, and Mr. Dodge got a team and drove Mr. Ashmore over the southern portion of the town. The map showed the railroad as entering that quarter, and Mr. Dodge had no notion of doing violence to the genius of the geographer.

At sight of a level spread of pasture and

meadow, comprising some forty acres, the visiting financier exclaimed: "There's the identical spot, by gosh; there's our terminal ground. There ain't no reason why I should n't arrange to buy it to-day. Who claims that tract of land, driver?" he asked, imperiously, of the negro that drove the team.

"Doan know, suh," answered the colored man.

"That belongs to Anton Nelson, an old and very dear friend of mine. I will introduce you to Mr. Nelson, Mr. Ashmore; glad to do it; you are both my friends. You ought ——"

"Drive to this Anton's house, at once, nigger," cut in the man from Chicago, who evidently had learned how to silence Mr. Dodge.

Without waiting to enquire about such trifling matters as title, or possession, or survey, Mr. Ashmore announced his selection of the ground for the use of station and switch system. He did not ask if it was for sale; he simply demanded to know the price.

"Really, Mr. Ashmore, I never have made a price on that little scrap of land," answered Mr. Nelson, deliberately. "It suits me very well as a pasture for my horse and cow—right here at town, you see. Then I cut a bit of fodder there for winter. I never have thought of selling it."

"Name your price, Mr. Nelson," insisted the Chicago man.

"Yes, yes, my dear old friend, business is business. What will you take for it? My friend, Mr. Ashmore, is from up North and does business quickly. Name the figure and we shall have a trade in a minute," Mr. Dodge put in.

Mr. Nelson stood immovable for a few moments, looking fixedly down the street, as if he saw a train coming over the new line. Then a cloud passed over his countenance, as if he had parted forever from some old friend. Mr. Ashmore became restless in the silence, and slid about uneasily in his seat; but Mr. Nelson did not notice this, and did not answer. He seemed to be dreaming. At last he took the pipe from his mouth and said, very deliberately: "I don't reckon I will name a price to-day, gentlemen. I can not think of parting with that little patch of ground. It was my father's, and I never have sold anything that he left me. I am old enough to have outgrown that sentiment, I reckon, but I have n't done it. Then, it suits me very well to keep it; I would n't know how to do without it. But I 'll study on it, and if I decide to sell, will communicate with Mr. Dodge."

"But, Nelson, this is a great public improvement; there 's millions in it for you fellows, millions. It 'll make your town bigger'n Nashville. We could have went to Columbus with this railroad; they wanted it bad enough; but we wanted to boom Kosciusko. Think of it! twenty trains a day, each way, will come tooting in here. Your house and lot 'll be worth five thousand more'n 't is to-day. Think of it!" poured out the so-called capitalist.

"Then I shall have to sell my old home-place; I can not afford to live in a house worth five thousand dollars. You upset all my plans for the future, and remove all the land-marks that bind me to the past. There is no music in the

tooting of a locomotive. I'd rather hear that mocking-bird that whistles for me every time I go down to the pasture. To tell you the truth bluntly, Mr. Ashmore, I don't feel the pressing need of any more railroads; it bothers me to pay fare on this one."

"Oh, Tennessee must have more roads; hain't got half enough. You're way behind the times. We must have a great trunk line, from ocean to ocean," persisted the boomer.

"Then Mrs. Nelson will have to go to the seashore in summer, and to California in winter. That would ruin me, sure. No, gentlemen, I can't see any call for the railroad," answered Mr. Nelson, quietly.

"I'll give you five hundred an acre, by Government survey," said Ashmore, with a trace of disgust in his tone.

"That is more than five times its value, Mr. Ashmore," said Mr. Nelson, after a moment's reflection.

"Will you take a hundred an acre, then?" asked Ashmore, quickly.

"I shall have to study over it a few days before I name any price."

"Well that beats hell!" exclaimed the man from Chicago, who never had thought that a man could own a thing that he would not sell. "I'll give you a thousand an acre," he cried, in desperation.

"You will have to excuse me from naming a price to-day, gentlemen," repeated Mr. Nelson, without changing tone or expression under this fire of enormous sums.

"Yes, yes, think it over, friend Anton; we will see you again in a day or two. We are going out to Elmington to see Colonel Grayson, and will be back to-morrow or the next day," said Dodge, who knew how fruitless it was to barter with the conservatism of Mr. Nelson.

"I shall be glad to see you, gentlemen, at any time. My house always is open for friends, if not for business."

When they were out of Mr. Nelson's hearing, Ashmore said: "That is just like these damned old Rebels. They deserve to have their land taken away from them; it ought to be confiscated."

"But Mr. Nelson is not a Rebel; he is a Union man," said Dodge, in his most subdued voice.

"Mebbe, but he has n't the push of the Radicals I know in the Legislature," cried Ashmore.

"Perhaps not; he is of another class from those vagabonds," Dodge had to confess.

XLII

WHICH TREATS OF BUSINESS METHODS UNDER ADVANCED CIVILIZATION

THE regular session of the Legislature opened early in November, after an adjournment in July. Public measures of great importance to the members, if not to the State, kept this linsey-woolsey mass of humanity in Nashville the most of the year during these troublous days.

The Southern men who had participated in the affairs of the Confederacy had not attempted to vote since their return; yet new and more stringent franchise laws were constantly in demand. At first this heroic legislation was thought to be prompted by malice, and perhaps it was so; but later, when appropriations were to be granted to railroads, turnpikes and other projects for internal improvements, the true animus was disclosed. Those who owned the property and paid the taxes found themselves without the one protection under a democratic form of government — the ballot.

The Southern man had not appeared at the polls since the collapse of the Confederacy; yet the County Guards, ostensibly created for the protection of the ballot-box, constantly needed extension of powers and authority. These precautions against treason were heralded by the press from ocean to ocean, as examples of the wisdom and statesmanship in control of Tennessee.

But more than all else, the Volunteer State was at last started in the great race for material prosperity. This required much legislation. Her priceless deposits of iron ore, coal and marble were attracting the attention of capitalists of a certain class; her fertile valleys and abundant forests had caught the notice of hundreds of men who were able to deal in large sums of money — on paper.

The old Commonwealth had been conservative; the people born and bred in the midst of all this wealth of nature had never sought to force their commodities on the world in advance of a reasonable and natural demand. They knew all about their unusual resources; but they had not learned that coal, iron and marble were perishable; they thought these articles of commerce could be used, or kept for future generations, at will.

Not so the adventurous capitalists who now swarmed the State. To these industrious persons the future had no promise; the present time was everything. They scoffed at the very mention of posterity; they scouted the idea of future needs and values.

“What Tennessee needs is railroads and turnpikes!” they shouted. “With these advantages at command, we can drive this coal, iron and marble down the very throats of the world, civilized and barbarous.” And they projected their improvements in every quarter. Their lines of railroad led toward every great commercial center, although none, in fact, reached the narrow limits of the State.

J. Phillip Ashmore was the acknowledged

leader of this crowd of public benefactors. He had a keen eye for hidden wealth, a resourceful brain for methods of development, and a genius for the calculation and demonstration of sure profits. His proposed line, the Atlantic, Kosciusko and Pacific Railroad, Iron and Coal Company, was regarded with much favor in the Legislature. Its matchless qualities were well displayed; the scheme was thoroughly organized.

So high was the esteem in which it was held, that Mr. Ashmore was granted special privileges in the State House. He had at his disposal a room opening upon the floor of the House of Representatives, in which to spread his exhibit. Note the wonderful strides of civilization! In the sleepy old days of Sevier, or Houston, or Crockett, or Jackson, or Polk, this room had been used by committees for the transaction of public business. Here Ashmore hung on the walls his maps with yellow borders; he piled bits of iron ore in one corner, chunks of coal in another, slabs of marble in the third, and set up a saloon in the fourth. The last mentioned feature of his exhibition engrossed the attention of the statesmen; they kicked the ore, spat upon the coal heap, stood at the bar as long as they could, and when exhausted by undue sampling of liquors, lolled on the marble.

The leaders of both Houses had committed themselves to his scheme during the summer, but their followers came around slowly. Some seemed to hold off for substantial arguments; others found the presence of Mr. Ashmore and his campaign material so agreeable that they stood

for delay. In truth the bar proved so suitable that it came near defeating the object for which it was brought into being.

The business man from Chicago was not slow to discover the trend of affairs; he saw that he was killing his prospects with kindness. Nothing short of a coup would take his measure out of the danger of convenient delay. Besides, the campaign was expensive, the consumption of liquors increased daily, as the crowd of hangers-on and men about town learned that everything was free.

For a time the bill had gone swimmingly; the Senate had disposed of it with less than a dozen negative votes, the opposition of a few old fogies who had by accident gotten seats in the aristocratic body. In the House of Representatives, it had passed two readings, but obstructions were now beginning to appear. Objections were made to its being called up out of regular order, a quorum was not present, or the speaker failed to recognize the right person at the right time.

Desperate with this trifling, Ashmore planned a master raid. He would pass the bill the following night, or know the reason for further procrastination. First, the speaker was "fixed," sure and safe; then came the member who would advance the measure, rough-shod, over all intervening and obstructing business. But the way for this had to be prepared, for there was a leaven of decency, even in this damnable collection. All friends of the bill must be made ready to act on a moment's notice; a day's laxity, in the interest of free whisky, might give to this weak

minority an advantage that could not be reclaimed in months.

The next morning an extra stock of liquors was brought in and deposited behind the bar. Arrangements were made for a busy day. The lobby was marshalled; each member of this discreditable power had his work assigned. But the man of Chicago breeding, and claiming to practice Chicago business methods, was not content with these plans. He had claimed all along to be the exemplification of a new and advanced civilization; a civilization that presumed to lead the world with a banner bearing the strange device, "I Will." His reputation was at stake, for, to this time he had introduced only one unusual feature into his tactics — the bar. Everything else was old and commonplace. In this he fully reclaimed himself; for when the members of the Third House were organizing and taking their several allotted stations, they found their forces strangely augmented. Ashmore had brought in the women of the town to help in carrying his scheme through. This was the first appearance of the courtesan in the old State House as a political factor; it was not her last effort during the years of terror known as Reconstruction.

Right soon in the morning the urbane bartender was busy making cocktails, later on juleps were in great demand, and all day long the call of "straight" was prosperous. If a member on the floor of the House was slow in coming after his grog, a lobbyist carried the bottle to his desk and poured out his dram. To such a system had

the Chicago man reduced his arrangements, that he knew at the end of every hour the number of drinks each of the doubtful members had taken. Their capacity, he knew from previous experience. As the day wore on, the uproar increased; toward night it was deafening. Members were shouting, speaking, cursing.

By night the respectable minority had quit the hall in disgust; the procrastinators were, for the most part, asleep at their desks. Then the bill was called up and put on its final passage. Those who were sober enough, voted "aye;" those who were too far gone to answer the rapid roll-call, were counted as voting "aye." One member, a known supporter of the measure, could do no more than grunt; but a yellow lobbyist, who held the frail brother in his chair, called out in a piping voice: "He say, 'yas,' suh." And so the bill was passed.

Later on the Governor signed it, and the State had pledged its credit to a railroad that never was built, and never was intended to be built, to the precious tune of many thousands of dollars per mile. Much more than it would have cost.

All this in the State of Jackson, and Polk, and Sevier, and Houston, and Crockett, and a hundred other as illustrious names. All this in the chairs, at the desks, made historic and honorable by the presence of these great and good men.

XLIII

IN WHICH TWO CONSERVATIVE GENTLEMEN ARE INSTRUCTED IN BUSINESS METHODS

EQUIPPED with his charter, J. Phillip Ashmore proceeded to the seat of operations to organize his company and start work on the railroad. The lively scenes at the Capital had proved too much for Mr. Dodge's bilious temperament; he had quietly withdrawn before the grand climax, and awaited his principal at Kosciusko. Together they drove to Elington, for Ashmore expected to interest Colonel Grayson and Major Lewis in his project.

"You see," he said, when he had the Major in a corner from which there was no retreating, "I want the very best men in this town in my board of directors. Won't have no cheap fellers; must have everything first-class, strictly first-class. I have General Swanson, at Memphis; Colonel Jones, at Chattanooga, and General — somebody, at Charleston. All first-class, every one of 'em; they're old officers of the Federal army, and have lots of influence. None of 'em have money, though; I furnish all that from Chicago. Now, what I want, is influence, all up and down the line; I have money enough; I can finance the scheme in real Chicago style. Can I count you in?"

"I have no money, Mr. Ashmore," answered

Major Lewis, "and never engage in business that is beyond my means. I never owed a debt that went an hour past due; but if I should go into this enterprise I'd become hopelessly involved. There are plenty of men who would be glad to join you, but you will have to leave me out."

"Not a dollar is needed; I shall not put up more than my check. See here, Colonel Grayson, come and hear this great offer. I want you and Major Lewis to go into my company—I want you to be incorporators and directors in the Atlantic, Kosciusko and Pacific Railroad, Iron and Coal Company. It's a great honor; your names'll be printed on letter-heads, and everything else. What say you, Colonel?"

"For myself, I have no money, and times are not propitious for going into debt. I thank you for the offer, but you will have to excuse me, Mr. Ashmore."

"You Southern fellers beat all I ever seen; you are the slowest to see a chance to get rich that I ever seen. Why don't you hustle, like we do up in Chicago? We don't let no grass grow under our feet up there. Now's your time to make a fortune; I'll make it for you, if you'll give me a chance. Now listen; it's just like this: I have my charter and the bonus all voted; we have to organize our company, subscribe the capital stock, and pay down ten per cent of stock subscriptions. That's all. We shall organize with ten millions capital, pay in one million in checks and take our stock. The bonds will then be issued to us, a part of them at least, and then we will begin work on our road. You see, these

bonds will be guaranteed by the State; that is provided for in my bonus; and we can sell them in New York as fast as the printer can run them off. For the benefit of having good men in my company, I'll let you in on the ground-floor. 'Twon't cost you a copper."

"We should have to pay our stock subscriptions, or ten per cent of them, at once," persisted Colonel Grayson, who never had conceived of any other way of doing business.

"Let me tell you again, you pay nothing—not a copper. We have to pay in the ten per cent before the commissioners will certify to the proper organization of the company, and give me an order for the first installment of the bonds. But we will pay with our checks; whether those checks are honored or not, is another matter. Don't you see? But, as they say in the Legislature, 'sly as you keep it,' I named those commissioners. The chairman is your judge, English. A good fellow, but I loaned him thirty-five hundred that he needed to buy a house with. He never has offered to pay it back. He will certify to anything, so long as I don't press him for that thirty-five hundred. Don't you see? It's well I did n't get old Judge Backus, or that Judge Florence on the commission. They're reformers. I kept clear of them. Now, all we have to do is this: Subscribe the stock, draw our checks, elect a board of directors, elect officers, get our stock, get an order for the bonds, sell our bonds, and begin work—understand, *begin* work. When we have done a little work — when we have begun — we get the balance of

the bonds and sell 'em, and the fortune is made. Don't you see? That's the way we do business in Chicago."

"You will have to excuse me, Mr. Ashmore. I am a common planter and can not cope with such large undertakings. I shall have to stick closely to my crop," said Colonel Grayson.

"As for me," said Major Lewis, "I can not think of making a fortune so quickly — it would plumb turn my head."

"Then you can't say I never gave you a chance to get rich. Of course, you won't mention my methods; I told you that in strict confidence."

"We have no occasion to put it on that, Mr. Ashmore," said Major Lewis.

"I see that dinner is served, gentlemen. This is a special occasion, Mr. Ashmore. We are having a family dinner to-day in celebration of the thirtieth anniversary of the marriage of Major and Mrs. Lewis. A happy accident caused the event to take place here, instead of at Fairfax, otherwise you would not have found us at home. We are glad to have you with us, sir."

"Oh, a wedding dinner! Just my suit! The last wedding dinner I attended was at Mr. Admore's, the great pork packer. It was a grand affair — presents cost more 'n ten thousand. Full dress, even to the waiters. We do things up brown, in Chicago. Nothing cheap up there."

J. Phillip Ashmore was not the man to be cast down by the refusal of Major Lewis and Colonel Grayson. Mr. Dodge was more tractable, and readily subscribed for as large a block of the stock as the promoter would allow. Then Sheriff

Streeter, Provost-Marshal Samson, Agent Bragg, and Felix Grayson came forward and lent their names and influence—so the organization was perfected. Each wrote his check for the requisite ten per cent of his subscription, and the Federal Government was enriched by the sale of six revenue stamps that were affixed to these documents of exchange. Beyond that, no money passed, for no one of the checks was paid. But they made such a formidable array that the commissioners certified that everything was correct, and gave the order for the first installment of the bonds, which were duly guaranteed by the State.

Everything was ready; the stock certificates were printed, the bonds engraved. Ashmore took the bonds, bundled off to New York by the first train, and placed them on the market. With the proceeds of this sale, a survey was made covering some fifty miles both east and west from Kosciusko, a portion of the right-of-way was secured, contracts for grading were let, and a large number of men were sent to the woods to work at cross-ties. A great bustling was made, which lasted until the promoter convinced the commissioners that he was entitled to draw the balance of the bond issue, when suddenly there came a halt.

Contractors were not paid, poor men who had cut and stacked cross-ties along the right-of-way hunted in vain for the treasurer of the Atlantic, Kosciusko and Pacific Company. When last seen he had the bonds in a carpet-bag, headed toward New York.

The State's credit was given, both for principal

and interest, to the serious extent of a million of dollars; and the people who had this to pay, through the medium of taxation, were benefited only for a few thousand dollars.

And here the project slumbered for months, until the officers at Kosciusko took the matter up and secured an additional bonus from Williams and other counties along the proposed line, when building began anew. This action was no more sincere than the first; for as soon as the county bonds were issued and disposed of, the whole scheme suffered a complete and final collapse.

XLIV

THE NEW CITIZEN DEMONSTRATES HIS PREROGATIVE

AFTER pledging, beyond power of redemption, the credit of the State in aid of railroads, turnpikes, and other schemes for internal improvements, no one of which was carried out, the Legislature found time to pass the Fifteenth Amendment. This final act was not unexpected; if the white men and tax-payers had not been proscribed from exercising like privileges, it would not have been odious.

The first election under the expanded franchise came the following August. It was a great holiday. The negroes left the plantations at crack of day and congregated in Kosciusko, the only polling-place in the County of Williams. A fair election could not be had with less than twenty-five polling-places, so wide and long was the county. But fairness was not a virtue in those unhappy days; it was not sought after.

As there was no work being done, Manning Lewis made a holiday and took Mary Lou for a horseback ride. Instead of calling upon some of their friends, as was their custom on these rides, they turned toward Kosciusko to take a look at election methods.

The County Guards were out in force; the negro military company was under arms, and stood guard about the old court-house, where the balloting was in progress. Manning and Mary Lou

made no attempt to approach the scene, but stopped their horses fifty yards away to observe the new proceeding. A speaker, from an improvised platform, harangued the crowd until he was exhausted, and then another took his place. The auditors did not seem to tire. All the speeches were anarchistic in sentiment; some were directly incendiary. The principal theme was the division of land and mules, and the expulsion of the native-born whites. This subject, for all its delays and disappointments, seemed always fresh and entertaining to the ignorant blacks.

Printed ballots were spread on the upturned side of a huge goods box. The voter came up to select or receive his ticket. As not one per cent of the colored men could read, they asked for a ticket bearing the name of some particular candidate for whom they wanted to vote. There were two tickets in the field: the Radical, representing the State administration; the Union Conservative, representing the better element of Union men in the South. The former party was in power; its emissaries managed the election.

The whites selected their ballots at will, and deposited them in the box without interruption. But the negroes were handed the Radical ticket, regardless of their wishes. Then they were forced to run the gauntlet between two files of watchers from the ranks of the Radical party, and to show their ballots to each regulator as they passed. If by any chance Cuffy had secured a Union Conservative ticket, it was promptly torn in pieces and the proper one substituted.

At the ballot-box, the ticket was again exam-

ined by Radical officers, and if satisfactory, it was deposited. Some little disturbance was made by a few persistent negroes who wanted to vote for "Mars Anton." These fellows were quickly disciplined, and if they yielded slowly to this correction, were thrown out of line. But all were anxious to exercise the glorious privilege of elective franchise, and so refractory ones eschewed their purpose to honor Anton Nelson, or any candidate on the Union Conservative ticket. Nearly every black man voted; all voted according to instructions.

So strenuously did the Radicals bully the poor, ignorant blacks, that the opposition candidates received, or counted, less than a score of votes. Mr. Nelson, as candidate for the Legislature, was defeated overwhelmingly by J. Phillip Ashmore, although the latter was not a citizen of Tennessee, and had never been in Williams County ten days at one time. For months he had been in New York with his bonds. But his record was no disqualification.

Manning and Mary Lou sat on their horses for some minutes, at a respectful distance, watching these proceedings. They made no move to interfere; no comments, except to each other. But their presence was noted, for an officer came out and spoke a few words to a black fellow in uniform, a member of the colored company. He marched down the street and rudely ordered them away: "Dis ain' no place fo' Rebels," he cried.

They turned their horses to go in obedience to this demand, when the negro pricked with the point of his bayonet the old war horse on which

Mary Lou was mounted. The animal reared, nearly throwing her from the saddle. Manning whirled on the impudent rascal, but being unarmed he yielded to the pleading of Mary Lou and rode away. The crowd shouted and jeered; the negro soldiers threw their caps in the air. It was a great victory.

On their way home they met Paul Willston, to whom they related the adventure of the day.

"Well, where?" asked Paul.

"On the Bluff," answered Manning.

"The hour?"

"Usual hour."

When they reached Elmington, Manning went in search of Howard; Mary Lou gave her father a narrative of her observations at Kosciusko.

"I have been curious for some time to know how the negro would vote," said Colonel Grayson, when he had heard the details of the methods practiced at that first day's election. "He can not read his ballot, he can not know who are up for the offices, nor can he judge of the qualifications of the several candidates. This day has set the precedent; these officers, who are the legal guardians of the colored man, have made the rule. The poor black man will be simply the creature of the dominant political party. He either will vote with the party in power, as he did to-day, or he will find it convenient not to vote at all. When our political disabilities are removed, we shall make use of him exactly as you saw the Radicals do in Kosciusko. It will be a nasty business, but our people will do it; they will find excuses in the precedent set by the Radicals. It is a bad beginning."

XLV

IN WHICH MYSTIC DEN MEETS A FOE

THE night was dark and rainy; the whole canopy was overcast with heavy, low-hanging clouds. Every reflector in the heavens was hidden; Erebus had spread a misty pall over every twinkler in his starry domain. Nature was hushed, as if depressed into eternal repose. The mocking-bird must have forgotten the day-songs, for he whistled not a note. The owl and the bat, of all animate nature, were alert; the one screeched, the other circled and darted about, as if to prove their sovereignty over gloom.

It was one of those nights in which colors shrink and lose their quality; only form could be distinguished, and that indefinitely. The path through the dense forest on the slope leading to the Bluff was as easily traced as the open highway. And yet men were abroad. Mystic Den had an affair on, and men were out to give it attention.

The breaking of dead twigs on the ground noted the approach of a horseman. When he reached the open on the Bluff he made the click-click sign of the order; but there was no response. He waited a minute; the cracking of twigs announced the approach of another horse with muffled feet. Click-click, came from the wood; the signal was answered by a like click-click in the open. The rider reined his horse

alongside the first to come. No word was spoken. The first to arrive struck a match and looked at his watch; it lacked ten minutes of eleven o'clock.

Within the space of ten minutes, eighteen other horsemen rode in, each giving the click-click signal as he came near the rendezvous, which was answered by those already in line. And yet no word was spoken. The one who had first arrived seemed to keep count, for as the twentieth rider gave the signal, he rode from the head of the line to a position in front, scratched another match, consulted his watch, and said: "The hour has come. From left to right, count."

They counted, but in a symbol of their own; there were nineteen in the line. The lighted match showed all to be dressed in the flowing gown of the order.

The leader then stated the purposes of the meeting: To avenge the outrage practiced by the negro soldiers that afternoon.

"What shall be the punishment?" he asked.

"May it please the Grand Cyclops," said one, near the centre of the line, "I suggest that we give these offenders ten lashes each."

"May it please the Grand Cyclops, make it twenty," cried another.

"Twenty lashes," echoed nearly every voice in a muffled tone.

"Fifteen lashes each, is the decree," said the leader.

"Fifteen lashes each, is the decree. So says the Grand Cyclops, and he must be obeyed," said nineteen husky voices in unison.

"Follow," commanded the leader, turning his horse and striking off through the wood in the direction of Kosciusko.

The horses stumbled and floundered over the rough surface of the woods-lot at a rattling gait, and were soon in the turnpike. Neither horses nor riders seemed to regard the blackness of the night. Had the moon reflected her full light, had every star in the dome of the heavens sent down its spark, these determined men would have ridden the same. To that Silent Army, lights and shadows were the most trifling of incidents.

Down the pike they swept at a killing pace, until Kosciusko was reached. Here a few flickering street-lamps relieved the murky night, and they silently formed into two squads, each in the general shape of a star. The Grand Cyclops rode well in advance, followed by the Grand Ensign carrying the banner of the Den. This was a new standard, wrought in silk, with the insignia of the order handsomely embroidered by hand. It had never before been flung to the night-breeze. Where it came from, no one seemed to know; no one asked. The Silent Army never asked questions.

The old town was asleep, save for a few drunken negroes who were struggling to get to their homes. These the Silent Riders did not notice; the leader headed toward the improvised town, the quarter inhabited by the freedmen.

As they reached the public square, they saw the smouldering embers of camp-fires; the colored men had been celebrating their full admission of citizenship. The troop either suspected nothing

or feared nothing from this, for it rode straight ahead.

Turning a corner in the open space, they passed between the court-house and a street lamp, when a volley of musketry cut the heavy air. With a groan, the leader rolled from his horse. The Grand Ensign dropped the banner over his form.

"One, seven, nine, watch over the Grand Cyclops; the other Ghouls follow me," cried the Grand Ensign, in an instant. The three men indicated sprang from their horses and raised the form of their fallen leader to a sitting posture.

"Howard!" gasped the fallen man, for the moment forgetting the disguise.

"Halt, Ghouls!" commanded the Grand Ensign, dropping from his horse. "Yes, Manning," he whispered, kneeling beside his old comrade, "are you hurt?"

"No, not hurt; only killed. Leave me; disarm the negroes. They are running; leave me, Howard; go on, go on. Oh, God! to have lived through a dozen battles, only to be shot down in the dark — by a nigger." And the head of the leader sank to his breast.

The squad waited no longer, but charged down the street after the fleeing blacks.

Without heed of the darkness or thought of another ambuscade, they pursued, through streets and alleys, the black men who had made good time during the moment of delay. At the old wooden bridge the freedmen attempted to rally and make a stand. But the officer could not form them. He lined three ranks, but they broke away; some pitched their guns into the Opal and

slunk into the darkness; others more brave, stood the ground, but shifted for themselves. Nearer and nearer came the hoof-beats of the Silent Riders.

Despairing of order and not knowing what else to do, the commanding officer bawled out: "Hi, thar, stop or we shoots!"

The pursuers disregarded the threat, and charged straight into the crowd. The negroes did not shoot; they threw down their guns without a word of protest, and dropping on their knees, pleaded for mercy.

Sixteen great whips were drawn from beneath sixteen flowing gowns, and for a little time did painful execution over the shoulders of the miscreants within reach. The new citizen was still a slave; he could not defend himself. After the chastisement had been called off, the colored men were ordered to disperse, only the leader was detained.

A few words were spoken: "Take off his coat and breeches; they're the Federal uniform," said the Grand Ensign. A short and unequal struggle followed; then all was quiet.

The men in flowing robes went silently back to the square, took up the body of their fallen leader, and moved quietly toward the north.

The next morning the body of a negro was found swinging from a halter-strap beneath the old bridge. His arms were pinioned with whip lashes, and on his breast was pinned a card bearing the cabalistic * *. It was the ambitious leader of the colored militia.

In a bundle, carefully folded, was the Federal uniform that the foolish man had disgraced in his blind zeal. The men who wrote the history of this event and affixed to their work the claim of authenticity, forgot to mention this one act of respect for the Federal Government. Nor was this their only sin of omission.

XLVI

UNCLE PHIL'S LAST BAPTIZING

A PERIOD of guerrilla warfare followed the shooting of Manning Lewis. The negroes took small part in this. They were afraid to meet any foe; a mysterious one was little less than supernatural and could not be thought of. But the members of the County Guards returned naturally to their old occupation; it suited them so well that they neglected their official duties as teasers for the Carpet-Baggers.

The Silent Army suffered many an ambuscade, and lost many a good man. They complained not at this; they took it as the fair outcome of their own acts. The contest was furious. The County Guards were such masters in this diabolical art of sneaking, that for a time it looked as if they would drive the Silent Army from the field. But intelligence soon overmatched brute cunning, and the natural-born bushwhackers were pushed to that extremity that they had either to quit the contest or give to their operations a new feature. This they did by outraging negroes in a manner that left suspicion on the Order of the Two Stars.

Those who suffered most keenly from this turn in affairs were black men who had remained with their masters and had declined the advice and support of the Freedmen's Bureau. Because they had refused to become loafers, they had been regarded all along as traitors to their political guardians. Many harmless negroes suffered the

extreme penalty for non-conformity to the ordained scheme of political salvation. And the newspaper correspondents recorded all this against the Order of the Two Stars.

As soon as the Guards began this reflex movement, the Silent Army doubled its vigil. These faithful servants had become surpassingly endeared by their devotion through adverse fortune. Had the two opposing forces met at this time, either the Carpet-Baggers would have out-run the Silent Army, or there would have been fought a battle of extermination. The County Guards well knew the temper of their foe, as well as its habits. Accordingly they made their predatory raids on foot through field and wood where horsemen could not pursue, and would not be met with.

This serious business lasted for several months and might have continued much longer, only that the officers overshot the mark. The act that brought on the climax, and marked the limit of cruelty in that cruel aggregation, occurred on a bitter night of mid-winter, when the heavens were lowering with snow-clouds. A dozen of the Guards, with feet muffled in rags and faces masked, came across lots to Elmington. Pleas was to be their victim, if he could be overtaken safely remote from home. But chance favored Pleas; he was not abroad. They dared not, for all the darkness, venture within gun-shot of the house. So, after they had waited about in the cold, they started toward Kosciusko, sore and disappointed. At the Opal, Brassley had an idea.

"Thar 's thet ole preacher, Phil; les' thrash him; he nerr was beat like other niggers."

Their mood was savage; any sanguinary proposal would have carried. They made for Uncle Phil's cabin, broke in the door, and dragged him from bed with great noise and vulgar threats. The old man made no resistance; he showed little alarm. True to her nature, Aunt Manda fought like a tigress; but she was quickly overpowered and tied hand and foot. Without allowing him to dress, they hustled Uncle Phil into the cold. His old feet were bare, but he walked on the frozen clods with little complaint. Zack Brassley, who was in command, gave orders that the old man be baptized. He clearly forgot himself and spoke in his natural voice.

"Dat am yo', Zack Brassley," said Uncle Phil. "Doan perfane de sacramint; kill me if yo' wants to, but spar' de sacramint."

"We'll hev to kill him, now," cried Brassley, "he'll tell on us. Wall, les' duck him fust."

A hole was cut through the ice on the pool where Uncle Phil had so many times administered baptism to his people; and two lusty scoundrels, one standing on either side of this, holding him by the arms, lowered him under and then lifted his drenched body into the frosty air. Again and again this was repeated amid the laughter and curses of the heartless tormentors; and each time, as the old man was going down, he said, calmly and fervently: "In de name of de Father —"

When the diabolical malice of the persecutors had been somewhat satisfied they dragged their poor victim out and ordered him to stand. But his legs refused to support him. His scanty

night clothing was frozen stiff. He dropped upon the ice, a shivering mass. With great effort he clasped his hands together, and in a trembling voice said: "Let us pray: 'Ou' Father which art in heaven —,'" Instantly there was silence. The tormentors dropped back; they could not listen to the Lord's Prayer. This act of piety, so natural and characteristic in the old man, brought him quick relief; for the darkness was cut with a bright flash, the stillness was shocked with a pistol report, and Uncle Phil prayed no more.

It was another vicarious atonement, for soon after the torture of Uncle Phil, coming as it did when the night of this chaos was blackest, light began to break. The County Guards had for months so neglected their political functions that they had become useless to the Carpet-Baggers and the Federal officers. Now they were hunted by the Silent Army until they dared not show themselves, and were clearly in the way. But they strove to hold their place within the party organization. They did not want to be politically lost. In attempting to maintain their standing, they quarrelled with the Carpet-Baggers over spoils; they refused to go out of doors to do the dirty work of the Federal officers.

This condition was quickly followed by criminations and recriminations — the brawl was incurable. For once, spoils lost their cohesive power. The spoilsmen, who depended the one on the other, fought like cats and dogs.

Then the party that had brought forth and fondled these vipers, sickened on the disgrace.

The brutal franchise laws were changed, and the white man of the South again took the ballot in his hand. To what extent he emulated the conduct of the Radicals in controlling the negroes' vote, it is not the province of this tale to relate. It would have been unusual, indeed, if the restored citizen had not availed himself of every expedient that would again place the administrative power in other hands than those that had so wantonly misruled for six years—misrule that cost the South more heartaches than four years of war; more fortune than the support of its own and an invading army. That subject deals with quite another epoch in our history. With the decline of the rule of Carpet-Baggers, this narrative must close.

This change in sight, the Silent Army was disbanded as quietly as it had been organized. The twenty-eight months of its existence had been troublous and exciting months. Those who had engaged in it were well tired of the strain, and were glad to have it put away.

Other secret orders sprang into existence, one for each unsettled grudge. These had no general organization; they were wholly lawless and predatory. But their acts were charged to the Order of the Two Stars, even after it had ceased to be.

XLVII

A WAR-WIDOW

AGAIN the wheat and the oats were harvested, and corn was so far advanced that work on it was "laid by." Again the procession of pleasure-seekers had driven down the turnpike and turned into the old Military Road on its way to the Plain of Tempe. The company was small; some of those composing it were serious; but all were contented. All evidences of war were disappearing; the wretched period of half war, half peace, was a memory. One bright summer's evening when all were settled in the Plain, Howard Grayson, his wife, and his sister, were sitting on the porch of their cabin. The day's mail had just been brought into camp by Pleas, and Major Lewis sauntered over to get his portion from the budget — a copy of the daily "American."

"Now, Howard, don't get a chair for me; I'm not to sit down and gossip this blessed evening away. I have orders. Mrs. Lewis has engaged to read the political news to your father and me over at St. Lewis's hut, and I'm instructed to hurry back. 'O'ders is O'ders,' as a distinguished Radical politician had a habit of saying, once upon a time, and I have ever since made it a point not to trifle with them. Then, the Colonel and I are hungry for political sustenance. We've discussed yesterday's instalment and have it thoroughly digested, agreeing to only one proposition

— to disagree. He thinks Grant will do the right thing by the South; I think Grant won't have a thing to do about it — the politicians will do for us what seems expedient, which is equivalent to saying that we shall get the butt end of the stick. And I'm right, as usual. Remarkable, we never did fully agree; yet in more than forty years we never have quarreled — which proves that I'm a peaceable man."

The Major had taken the proffered seat; he was in a mood to talk. The Graysons were engaged with their mail.

"I reckon I'm getting old," mused the Major, trying to focus his eyes on the newspaper, "I can't tell heads from tails without glasses. Pardon me, Miss Mary Lou, I did n't aim to interrupt you; I was sort of studying aloud."

"I think it is a good time for some of the family to apologize for your neglect, Major Lewis," said Mary Lou, looking about her. "Here we all sit reading our mail without so much as 'excuse me.' I'd rather listen to your talk than to read a letter any time. How delightful the Plain is, after these years of absence."

"I've been here more than forty summers and it never before looked so charming. The wrath and fury that have been rampant the past six years have left no frown on the face of nature here. You see man was not here to furrow and seam it with angry lines. Old Mount Ossa looks as smiling as ever; Olympus never had a more cool or more fragrant breath. I'm glad there are no marks of man's passions here, except those we carry on our hearts."

Howard had finished his letter, and sat thoughtful and serious.

"Well, young man, what's the trouble now? Knitted brows are not in style at the Plain," said the Major.

"I've just finished a letter from an old friend of both our families, saying he wants to return to Tennessee to visit us, especially Little Sister. As he says, he 'wonders' if he will be well received."

"If he is a friend of this family, he can bet his eternal salvation he will be cordially received. If he's a friend of the Lewises, he'll have to take his chances," said the Major.

"Who could ask such a question?" enquired Mary Lou.

"Captain — now Colonel — Avery," answered Howard.

"He is a gentleman, a man of courage; I'd love to see him again," said the Major, rising from his seat.

"We remember Captain Avery very pleasantly; why should we not receive him kindly?" asked Mary Lou.

"But he put the matter a bit stronger than I quoted," said Howard.

Major Lewis started to leave, saying: "I think Mrs. Lewis waved her hand for me to come home. I don't dare to stay longer. Good-evening, for now," and he walked quickly away. Evidently he did not care to hear more.

"I can not make my answer any stronger, Howard," said Mary Lou, after the Major was out of hearing.

"Then you are content with our quiet little life;

satisfied to remain the sweetest sister in all the world?" asked Howard.

"If I could think myself that. Life is very delightful with you, and Margaret, and father. Don't think I am getting old; don't fear that you will have an old maid on your hands. I never shall be one. I went from girlhood to — widowhood. I am a war-widow."

"Poor Manning!" sighed Howard.

"No, Brother; you did not know it, but that could never have been. Not poor Manning — The Cause."

THE END.





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